

THE AUTHENTIC BIOGRAPHY OF
COLONEL BECK

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Acc. No.	13458
Class No.	G. 10.
Book No.	786



COLONEL BECK—AS SEEN BY THE WELL-KNOWN
POLISH CARTOONIST CZERMANSKI

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THE AUTHENTIC BIOGRAPHY OF COLONEL BECK

by

J. H. HARLEY

Based on the Polish by

CONRAD WRZOS

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Introduction by

COUNT EDWARD RACZYNSKI

Polish Ambassador to the Court of St. James



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HUTCHINSON & COMPANY
LONDON

Acc. No.	13458
Class No.	G. 10.
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Made and Printed in Great Britain at
The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

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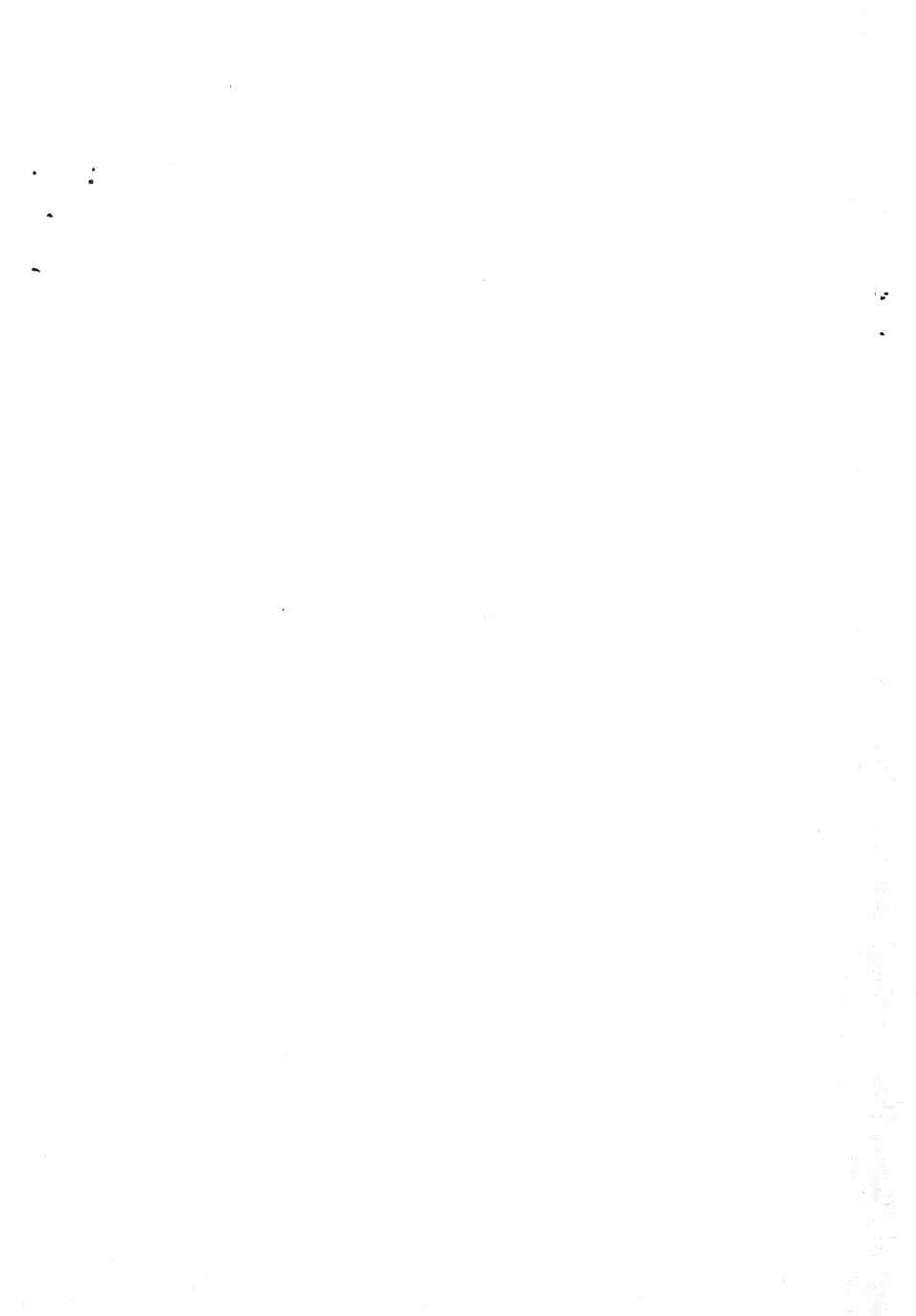
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FOREWORD

BY THE POLISH AMBASSADOR

I AM GLAD that a book on Colonel Beck is appearing in English and it gives me very great pleasure to be asked to write this Foreword. I have read the book and I am persuaded that it gives a clear and authentic estimate of its subject.

Such a book, in my opinion, is especially needed at the present hour because I am well aware that Colonel Beck has for a long time been regarded by many as the 'mystery man of Europe,' or as simply a suave and clever diplomatist. As a statesman he has certainly had more than his share of the criticism which usually attends the work of public men. In some respects this is not a wholly disadvantageous result, for to call a man dangerous or enigmatic is to make the public anxious to know as much as it can about him.

Personally I knew very well that there was a great deal in this that did not do him justice, because, having the honour to enjoy his friendship, I regretted that such criticisms too often overlooked his great gifts, his penetrating mind, his large power of vision, his ability

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to reach right into the core of events, his terse and epigrammatic definitions and his original way of thinking as shown in his ability to comprehend even the most involved and delicate conceptions.

But what I value in him most of all is his great courage. This is not only personal, the courage of the soldier, but it has become that even greater courage which consists in holding fast to your convictions amid all the circumstances and discouragements of life. He has a keen sense of national dignity and he makes this a criterion and estimate of the affairs of State.

Coming now to my own personal views and experiences, I cannot abstain from dwelling on a point which will appeal to all who know anything about the conditions of a diplomatic service, and that is the sense of complete security which any who work with him feel and enjoy. He is always ready to assume full responsibility for any honest work done by them, even if, as sometimes happens, such work has been followed by consequences which have arisen from a mistake. 'He has a great deal of what the French call *esprit*, as the author of this book says, 'and his ironical and caustic comments sometimes penetrate to that deeper side of life where the comic abuts on the tragic. . . . But all these qualities are suffused and ennobled by a religion of honour, the inspiring force of which was revealed in the peroration with which he concluded his speech in the Sejm when announcing the British guarantee.'

FOREWORD

The biographer repeatedly mentions that Colonel Beck is a disciple of Marshal Piłsudski, and there cannot be the slightest doubt that he took over from the great Marshal the main ideals, principles, and methods on which his life was based. That does not mean, however, that as he grew in stature he did not develop his own individual style, but it does mean that if we are to attain to a full understanding of Beck as a man we must take into account that deep devotion to Marshal Piłsudski which will remain as a kind of religious ardour throughout all the rest of his life.

I shall be exceedingly happy if, thanks to this book, there may emerge a deeper understanding of Colonel Beck which will correspond more exactly with the real man as he is and as he works. Perhaps in that progress he will drop some of these qualities which embroider the 'man of mystery,' but he will gain at the end, because those who read this book will arrive at a better appreciation of his real and undoubted qualities as a Minister and a statesman.

EDWARD RACZYNSKI.

NOTE

THIS BOOK, IN so far as it relates to the past career of Colonel Beck, is mainly based on the materials collected by Conrad Wrzos in his recent Polish work entitled *Józef Beck*. This dependence is practically entire in Chapter VII, and to a slightly lesser degree in Chapter VIII. Mr. F. B. Czarnomski has prepared the index and has also been of the very greatest assistance at every part of the work. Mr. Antoni Balinski of the Polish Embassy has selected the speeches which have been translated from the Polish by Mr. W. J. Peace. The frontispiece is reproduced from the striking cartoon of the well-known Polish cartoonist, Czermanski.



CHAPTER I

A MAN OF THE HOUR

COLONEL BECK'S RECENT visit to London has had three main effects—it has marked the inauguration of the British-Polish pact, it has seen Poland again take a leading place in the imagination of the peoples of Great Britain and it has attracted attention to the personality of Colonel Beck.

During the early part of the nineteenth century, and extending down to 1863, Poland occupied a great share in the affections of the British people. Especially during the times of the Polish insurrection—in 1830 and 1863—the British newspapers were full of tales of her movements and her woes. Other questions seemed to pale in interest and occupy a subordinate place. In 1863 and 1864 not even the American Civil War called forth the same efforts from British newspaper correspondents as did the gallant struggle of Poland to retrieve her fallen destinies.

Nor were there wanting historians who justified this interest by an analysis of the situation. Lord Acton especially saw in the disrupted and oppressed Poland the

key to most of the unrest and the source of most of the revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century. Poland was a soul wandering forth in search of its body through all these troubled years and until that soul met again the body from which it had been unjustly reft there would be no lasting peace and harmony in Europe.

So at any rate it seemed to some of the most progressive elements in British thought during the reign of William IV and the early years of Victoria. Societies were formed to espouse the Polish cause—notably the 'Literary Society of the Friends of Poland,' of which during its earliest years the poet Thomas Campbell was a bright particular star. Lecturers went through the land taking the woes of Poland as one of their favourite and most acceptable themes. Ministers and laymen offered freely the hospitality of their homes to Polish revolutionaries who had to leave their own country to escape a possible and terrible wrath to come.

All that was the case, as has been already remarked, up to 1863, and then there took place, and that very suddenly, a most remarkable change. Poland, from occupying almost the first place, came soon to fade away almost completely from the foreign outlook of the British radicals. It was only a few years from the time when Sir Charles Dilke was to make the terrible statement—an evidence, at the same time, of how the most instructed and capable can wander most blindly amid

the tangled events of history—"Poland died in 1863 and *died for ever.*"

What was the cause of the most remarkable change in the affections of the British publicists and people and why is it that a reversal of this attitude of indifference and even of estrangement has been connected so conspicuously with the statesmanship and with the personality of Colonel Beck?

One primal cause, undoubtedly, was that during the latter years of Queen Victoria and extending well up to the Great War, Russia began to occupy a commanding place in the attention of British publicists and statesmen. What that immense country did, what her designs were and how they could most safely be counteracted or diverted, became easily one of the most urgent questions of the foreign politics of that imperial day. When Russia filled so completely the country's horizon there was no space left which could be occupied by Poland.

At first, however, this attention which was exclusively claimed by Russia was connected with feelings of something like apprehension and alarm. The Tsar's soldiers were credited with deep designs on India. They were slowly but surely staking their claims on the Afghan frontier, and if their progress continued in the future as it had done in the past, they would soon be pouring their legions into the land of the Moguls and taking away from the British Empire what was regarded as the brightest jewel of the British Imperial Crown.

THE AUTHENTIC BIOGRAPHY OF COLONEL BECK

Alarm then, or at any rate apprehension, was the first reaction of British public opinion to the movements of Russia, but this state of feeling did not continue very long. It has often been remarked that when any Power threatens to become of exaggerated importance in Europe or, in Mr. Neville Chamberlain's phrase, makes a bid to 'dominate the world,' the British Foreign Office turns on this threatening Power the most powerful search-lights of its attention. It may be that it forms a hostile combination against it or it may be that it effectually kills it with kindness. In any case the result is that the offending Power is overthrown or rendered innocuous and the British Empire can still bask in the sunshine of security.

The second policy was that followed in regard to Russia when in the course of its onward drive that country was discovered athwart a main output of the British Empire. The enemy at the gates became the partner in an *entente cordiale*. Mr. W. T. Stead, in the latest Victorian days, discovered that the despot of Russia was a Man of Peace. Europe could best be saved from anarchy if a Cæsar gave the nod. Advanced politicians might recall the horrors of Siberia and protest that we were indeed soiling our hands if we entered into partnership with such a monster of cruelty. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman might wake up a public meeting with his dramatic call: "The Duma is dead; long live the Duma"; but the needs of the State were taken as super-

seding the scruples of the politician, and when the Great War burst upon Europe, Russia faced it with her millions of men in the role of Britain's ally.

That meant that, at the time when the Great War began, very few people in Britain knew much about Poland or had followed any of the movements which, even with its territory cut up and divided, had influenced the people of that country since the days of 1863. There was still a wave of sympathy in the land for what was regarded as an old, unhappy, far-off country. The Literary Society of the Friends of Poland had not ceased to function; but Poland was regarded as a kind of romantic *beau chevalier* or even as a Don Quixote who had tilted hopelessly at an immovable Colossus, and if what was termed a measure of 'autonomy' was to be granted her as a result of the War, that autonomy was to be granted as a kind of favour by a benevolent Despot and not earned by the force and power of her own right arm.

Certain movements, however, crept into the news after 1863 to give some indication that the Polish national spirit could never be broken. British readers heard of discussions in the Austrian Reichsrath where Poles were practising the art of constitutional strategy; they read of children's school strikes in Poznan which were a defiance of the gigantic power of the Second German Reich; they had been told that Poles were concerned in the Russian Revolution of 1905, but they knew nothing of

the most significant and what in the result proved the most masterly strategy of all—the strategy followed by the late Marshal Piłsudski.

Piłsudski's main effort—the master-inspiration of all his struggles—was to keep alive that old Polish revolutionary fervour which alone could win freedom for Poland by the power of her own efforts. He was suspicious of other movements only so far as they tended to damp this fervour or represented theirs as the only method which could be followed with ultimate success.

When the first shots of the Great War had been fired, those in Great Britain—and there were very few—who knew anything of what was happening in the Near East, may have heard of a small band of legionaries who crossed the Russian frontier to battle as David did against Goliath. They would not, however, think of it in this hopeful fashion but as simply another of the many abortive attempts to wage a hopeless struggle against overwhelming odds. They were mistaken in this, and the after years were to prove it; for Piłsudski had a method in what seemed his foolhardiness and he reckoned that Poland would never get her rights until the old Russia was smitten to her knees.

Piłsudski, in other words, had learned his lesson from the events of 1863. He was brought up in the midst of that latest attempt to fight gallantly against overwhelming odds; but he saw that the most devoted patriotism, backed up by the most self-sacrificing heroism, would

not win back the freedom of Poland against the fully-embattled might of the old Partitioning Powers. Their reduction to comparative weakness he expected to come as the result of the Great War; and in the resulting scramble he calculated—and his calculation was right—that Poland would come to her own.

Now the distinguishing interest of the career and achievements of Colonel Beck is that he has continued and extended this successful strategy of the old Marshal. His first great move which electrified Europe was the Polish-German Agreement, and this was quite certainly the inspired conception of one who was in the closest co-operation with Piłsudski's principles and policy. At first sight the Polish-German Agreement appeared to have in it an element of the romantic. It was like toying with the lion when the lion had the full use of its claws; but, as the result showed, there was a purpose behind it which produced something like a revolution in the whole results and methods of Polish foreign policy.

It will be apparent as the narrative goes on that Piłsudski had foreseen that Colonel Beck was eminently fitted to carry on and bring to full fruition this element of his outlook and plans. The Polish Foreign Minister had a good record as a soldier and went through his full course of training, but Piłsudski from the first selected him for work and relied on him for reports which showed that he had destined him for a career in quite another direction.

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A climax of that career has now resulted in the British-Polish Pact. Poland is once again fully in the news both in France and Great Britain and accordingly the present seems a fitting time to try provisionally to estimate the past life and experience of the Foreign Minister who, on behalf of Poland, was fated to achieve this result.

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CHAPTER II

HIS EARLY YEARS

COLONEL BECK WAS blessed with an exceptionally happy childhood. He had none of those unpleasant memories the repression of which constitutes an evil influence in many a life. So it was that when in after years the successful Foreign Secretary paid an official visit to Latvia, he found time to make a special trip to the seaside resort of Melugi to visit the old home and beach where he had spent many happy days with his parents.

His father and mother came from Central Poland and thus his earliest days were spent under the constraint of that unintelligent despotism which characterized the Empire of the Tsars. The father graduated in law at Warsaw University with a view to becoming an attorney and thus was entering a profession which, in other lands, would have subjected him to strictly conservative influences. In Poland, however, at that time it was otherwise. Whether attorney or not, the Pole was bound by the mere fact of his frequenting places where

his countrymen were wont to gather together, to expose himself to the suspicion of the authorities. Sometimes this meant imprisonment and often it meant exile; and always it had the effect of completely changing the course of a life.

Joseph Beck, the father, was no exception to this well-known rule. Whenever he could spare the time he frequented a secret Polish Trade Union group and took part in many a discussion on the resurrection of his country. The result was that, one fine day, he was surprised by the police and condemned to two years' imprisonment. In addition he was forbidden to exercise his profession within the limits of Polish territory in Russia. That meant that when at length he was liberated from prison at St. Petersburg, he had to migrate to Riga where his wife and family had settled.

There at Riga it might be thought that he had slender scope for his activities. He was that most unfortunate of mortals, a political ex-prisoner known to the police and always watched and suspected by the police agents. But Beck the elder was not the man weakly to yield to the necessities of his fortune. He would turn these necessities to very palpable gain for his country, and so he made his home a centre of influence from which generous impulses were propagated in every direction. All who visited the house partook in some degree of its spirit and in after years the family were often visited



by people who had known and respected them in these earlier years.

Despite such alleviations, however, the life of the elder Beck at Riga was such as could not continue very long. A man with a mind of his own could not endure to be continually under observation, to have the slightest independent movement suspected and his every gesture misinterpreted. Accordingly the shadowed patriot meditated a change and very soon the whole family were on the move to Lwów, in the Austrian part of the old Poland where they might hope to have a freer scope for their patriotic energies.

Indeed, in many respects this change was a most significant one. Of all the three parts into which the old Poland was partitioned, the Austrian part was the one in which they enjoyed the greatest measure of freedom. Russia was perfectly hopeless. If concessions were granted by that unintelligent despotism they were concessions which meant little or nothing, such as the promise of autonomy made by the Grand Duke Nicholas at the beginning of the Great War. In the parts of Poland, too, under the domination of Prussia, there was the same stern and unwavering repression by the devices of despotic power. But then it was instructed despotism and acted in accordance with certain rules of law. Of course that made it all the more menacing in the long run and ultimately Prussia was Poland's most dangerous foe! But at the time it was occasionally

possible for the Poles in Posen to make some progress in circumventing the law for a period at least by using some of its own provisions to defeat itself. In Russia, on the other hand, there was a great overpowering, lawless, absolutely brutal, and heartless Power enveloping the high-minded patriot on every side. It could never be placated or circumvented. And so it was that as has already been shown, Piłsudski felt that Russia was the great enemy and that the power of Russia could only be broken by a defeat in a major war.

In Austria the case was absolutely different. There the Pole could prepare himself for the day of his country's resurrection by practice in the art of government. He could be a member of central or local public bodies. He could learn something of public finance. The elder Beck was not the man to lose such facilities as these and accordingly we find that he soon secured employment in the Polish Provincial local government. He was evidently a man who made a good use of his chances and opportunities.

Still that did not mean that he had abated aught of his old revolutionary fervour. He was appointed secretary of the Limanowa County Council and afterwards Director of the local Loan and Credit Society; but despite the cares of official existence, he and his family found means of extending their patriotic activities throughout all the outlying districts. One dramatic

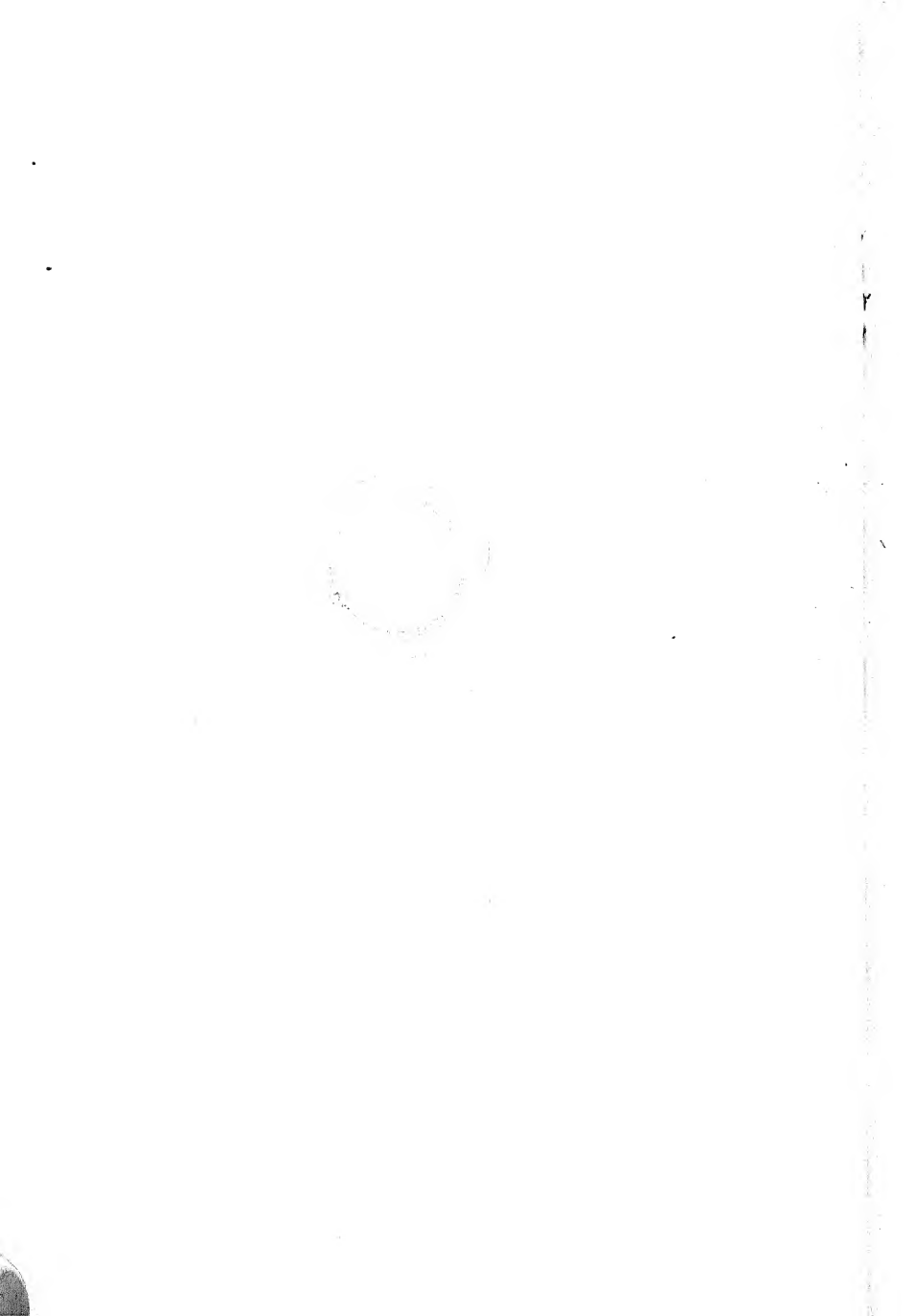
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COLONEI. BECK AS A LEGIONARY (1914)



HIS EARLY YEARS

circumstance indeed must have been to the young Beck, boy as he was, an undying source of interest. In the early days at Limanowa his mother was threatened with tubercular trouble and was ordered to recuperate at Zakopane, Poland's health resort among the Carpathians. There they met his father's elder brother Dionysius, whose home in Zakopane was a resort of men like Witkiewicz, the famous painter, Karłowicz, the composer, Zeromski, the novelist, and Joseph Piłsudski, the future Marshal of Poland himself. It is pleasant to think of the future Polish Foreign Secretary as being connected in some degree with the Marshal at such an early date through the impression which he doubtless left on Dionysius Beck.

But that was not all. He was soon to come into more direct contact with Piłsudski who was at that time, in pursuit of his strategy for the resurrection of Poland, the Commander of a Polish Volunteer Riflemen's Corps. As has been already pointed out, the house of the Becks was a great centre of influence. Thither there hied all sorts and conditions of men who were working for Polish independence, social workers, writers on social subjects, and above all, those who, having migrated from Russian Poland, were preparing an Austrian Poland for what they regarded as the inevitable struggle of the future. Many and important must have been the discussions under the hospitable roof of the Becks. Piłsudski, who was holding training courses for his

riflemen in the vicinity of the house, can hardly have failed to fill his hearers with enthusiasm for his far-reaching ideas. At any rate, Mrs. Beck showed that she was determined to forward Piłsudski's schemes by the utmost efforts in her power. She established a number of lending libraries which were much appreciated by Piłsudski's riflemen of Limanowa, and Colonel Beck, in recalling these scenes of his early years, often mentions that a number of these riflemen still remain in touch with these centres of instruction.

But it would be giving a false idea of the activities of the Becks if the impression were created that they were interested in political activities alone. Mrs. Beck was a pianist, and Colonel Beck's youngest paternal uncle was a competent exponent of the music of Chopin. Dionysius Beck and his family were connoisseurs in many forms of art. Both families visited, and they alternately spent their holidays at, Zakopane or Limanowa. And it was not only by travelling as far as Zakopane that the Becks found cultural inspiration. It is delightful for British people to read of the social life of the Polish houses in those pre-War days, how one house visited another, sometimes by surprise and unannounced, and how the young people made the old manor houses resound with their talk and merry laughter. The Becks had a neighbour of this kind—a Mr. Marr—of whom they were particularly fond. He was a cultured man interested in cultured people, with a

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special interest in architecture and a valuable collection of paintings. When we remember that the young Beck grew up in such an environment as this we cannot wonder that he grew up a man with many interests and with many sides to his nature.

CHAPTER III

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

THE YOUNG BECK started life dowered with the best and most productive heritage of all—the heritage of a good home. This had given him many varied interests and it had brought him in contact with those who had to play a leading part in the future history of Poland. Indeed, it would be true to say that the influences which moved him in his father's home coloured the whole subsequent course of his life.

It was not that he was simply made and moulded by his home as the sculptor shapes his inert block of marble. He was too powerful a spirit for that. Indeed, as the years went on, certain differences in mind and attitude began to manifest themselves between father and son. Youth is the time for venture and experiment; age is the time for ease and security. It would be untrue to say that Colonel Beck's father ever lost entirely his sympathy for the revolutionary fervour. His intercourse with those who were going to shape the Poland of the days to come would have saved him from such a fate. But there were some indications that as the years

went on, he settled down in his groove and became more or less satisfied with the opportunities which his groove gave him. He got interested in movements of social reform. He was, for example, a figure of note in the Co-operative Movement.

Any approach to an attitude of acquiescence in established relations was, on the other hand, foreign to the mental attitude of the young Beck. He had heard too many discussions in his father's home to believe that Poland could be saved if she lost the spirit of adventure. And yet there was no gulf opened between him and his father. There is no initial tragedy in the life of Colonel Beck—the tragedy of 'Father and Son' when the younger generation meets the older and the older seeks to crush the younger between the iron jaws of the past. In this case the older man and the younger were the closest of friends. Each respected the other. Each had the highest regard for the other's specific character and temperament. So it is that Colonel Beck has always been able to speak of his father with respect and affection and of his mother with unusual tenderness and sentiment.

Beck's first school was the High School at Cracow, but there is no information forthcoming as to his career at that scholastic seminary. So far as can be gathered he was much more influenced by the historic memories that surround the ancient city in which his school was situated—that renowned old Cracow with

its castle of the Wawel, wherein sleep great Polish kings, and with the Vistula flowing tranquilly below on its long road to the sea. There the past Poland met the present, which was forming itself in the mind of Beck as the result of all he had seen and heard in his father's house—the past as an inspiration to the recovery of former glories, the present as inducing a fervour of revolutionary enthusiasm to discover some way of rescuing his country from the hand of the oppressor.

Indeed, he was always, even during his school-days, seeking for some field of activity, entirely outside his school work, which would fit him to play some part in his country's deliverance. For example, he took, quite as a hobby, to aeroplane designing and building, and enlisted the help of a carpenter's apprentice to enable him to do something practical in this direction. With the help of this youth he managed to build a glider, and then, with the daring of an Icarus, and much to the disquietude of his mother, he actually made some trial flights in the air with his primitive mechanism. Of course he had the inevitable crash with his contraption wrecked, but he himself escaped from it all with nothing more than a sprained ankle.

Many experiences like this showed that amid all his school work he was keeping the needs of Poland before his mind, while the fact that from 1908 onwards he spent all his summer vacations either with his parental grandfather at Warsaw, or in the district of Lublin with Dr.

Luczkowski, must be reckoned as amongst the seminal influences of his life. For there—at Warsaw or at Lublin—he came in contact with the crassest Russian despotism—not the mild and modified form which he saw around him at Limanowa, but the heartless and hateful Power which relegated his people to prison, ever wrestling with their tyrants and appealing to all young and emancipated spirits to help in making their country free.

Yet, amid all his indignation at what was happening, during these years in Poland's capital, Beck never appeared to allow his honest wrath to blind him to the necessity of carefully preparing himself to face the realities of life. He had just constructed a glider, and perhaps it was the belief that he could do more in that direction which impelled him to spend a year (1912-1913) just before the Great War, in the Lwów Polytechnic, enrolling specially in its Machine Construction Department. But that was not all. Even after his year in Lwów the young man still continued to yearn for new experiences. He must get more proficient in foreign languages and in trade methods and theories. Accordingly, in 1913, he enrolled for the commercial course of the Foreign Trade Academy at Vienna, and having passed all his examinations successfully and being at that time barely twenty years of age, he became a graduate of that Academy.

There can be no doubt that the young Beck very

much enjoyed his time at Vienna. There is an abiding charm about the old-time capital of Austria which all the subsequent vicissitudes of later and more tragic days have been unable to dim or destroy. It was gay when the clouds were gathering. It retained its gallant tranquillity of spirit even when it was facing a deep and distressing abyss. Beck made the most of his life among the Viennese. He was not only to be found at students' political demonstrations, but also, so it is whispered, at the gayest parties and balls. He had no small skill as a dancer, and his friends say that up to the present day he still retains his liking for the beautiful Viennese waltzes.

At the same time he did not even in his pleasantest days at Vienna, forget that there were other sides of life which were to become of overwhelming importance to Poland. He had never quite lost contact with the leaders of the Polish independence movement who were making their military organizations more efficient. He joined the ranks of the Polish young men who were in support of such a way of working for Poland, and in order to improve his own knowledge of military affairs—a course supported by the same leaders of the independence movement—he enlisted in the courses for military training organized by the Austrian authorities in the High Schools under their jurisdiction. As he said at the time, such knowledge 'might be useful.'

At any rate, the few weeks before the opening of the

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Great War found him not only a graduate of the Foreign Trade Academy at Vienna, but also the instructor of Limanowa detachment of riflemen. Desperate hours were not to surprise him wholly unprepared for the issue.

CHAPTER IV

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

THE YOUNG BECK, as it happened, had now finished his scholastic career. He was in his father's house in very dangerous times. Europe was experiencing the tension and the stress of the few weeks which immediately preceded the Great War. The whole atmosphere was electric. Serajevo had just contributed its tragedy to the sequence of events, and it was evident to all who had eyes to see, that the assassination of the Archduke had brought civilization to the verge of a precipice.

None was more prompt to reach the import of what was happening than was the real inspirer of the riflemen detachments, to one of which the young Beck had attached himself. At the beginning of 1914 Marshal Piłsudski delivered a notable lecture before the Geographical Society at Paris, in which, at the first place, he showed that they were all wrong who expected that, whether as the result of a war or not, Poland might expect to get her independence as a gift from successful combatants. War meant an appeal to the sword, and if a country hoped to benefit by a war it must show that

there was perfect sharpness in its sword. And then, further to elaborate this line of thought, he uttered the memorable and prophetic words: "The problem of the independence of Poland will only be definitely settled if Russia is beaten by Germany and Germany is beaten by France. It is our duty to lend our help for that aim."

Here, then, are the two theses of Piłsudski's thought, the justification for which will become more and more apparent in the subsequent course of the narrative. In the first place, Poland must organize her own armed force, flying her own flag and under the command of her own officers. And in the second place, bearing in mind the realities of the situation, and if the achievement of Polish independence was its ultimate objective, this force should be directed initially against Russia. It was because the young Beck from the first seemed instinctively to sense the truth of both these theses that his career proceeded with such uninterrupted success.

Certainly he never hesitated in his decision, whenever the war broke out, that his place was at the front. He had just come back to his father's house, dowered with the social graces of Vienna. He was a good tennis player and he found many other young men at Limanowa of a like mind; but the story goes that one evening when they were discussing plans for the following day, the young Beck surprised his companions by exclaiming: "I won't come to-morrow!" And then, when they looked at him in surprise, he explained his words by

adding : " I'm going to the front to-morrow." In after years when he was asked why he had been so prompt and so certain, he simply replied : " I considered it a matter of honour ; it never even occurred to me that I should not answer the call when it was really necessary."

It ought now to be explained that there were two brigades of the Polish Legions, and that ultimately a third brigade was added to the two. The young Beck was first attached as a bombardier to the first artillery battery of the first regiment. He was so anxious to get to the front without loss of time that, when he discovered that owing to technical difficulties it would be impossible for the Limanowa detachment to join the colours immediately, he set off alone, with knapsack and rifle, to join as an ordinary private soldier. Otherwise he might have appeared at the head of his Company as its instructor and thus have begun with commissioned rank. As it was, he took every step in the ladder of promotion, beginning from the day when the staff officers, in view of the fact that he had been a Polytechnic student, decided that he should go as a bombardier into the artillery. To this extent at any rate did he find that his early interest in technical education and machine construction was going to stand him in good stead.

Such a decision, it must be added, was all to the liking of the young bombardier, who was only anxious to get to work and to show his mettle as early as he possibly could. Yet there was little of the pomp and

circumstance of glorious war in the situation as it had emerged when the second brigade got the order to march. For the time being the Russians had broken through the Austrian front. They had crossed the Carpathians and were pouring down in their myriads through the passes of Carpathian Ruthenia. The second brigade were to join the Austrian army corps of General Hoffman in order to stem this advance, but they were expected not only to stem it, but to undertake a counter-offensive in the region of Chust and in the direction of the Jabłonica Pass. As a result, the young Beck took part in several pitched battles, helping to haul his guns along the steep mountain slopes and declivities of the Eastern Carpathians no less than four times and back again.

It is difficult to realize all the dangers and discomforts that were involved in these irksome and risky operations. Four times up and down the Jabłonica Pass, and it is said that there where the Polish frontier now runs the artillery displacements are still plainly visible. The operations were carried out in winter when an icy cold wind seemed to arrest every movement and cut through every legionary to the bone. And when it is remembered that there were no roads to speak of, and that every gun had to be hauled up with ropes, it can easily be understood what trials there had been to endure. It sometimes took not less than fifty-four hours at a stretch for a single gun to be hauled up separately by an

artilleryman, and it was certainly no consolation for the tired soldier to reflect that once he had got his gun up the hill, he might expend just as much time and patience to get the gun down the hill again. It was amidst such surroundings that Bombardier Beck spent a whole winter of his life; although once, at any rate, the strenuous life was varied by a pleasant week spent under the canvas of a rest camp in the valley below.

There was indeed this consolation for the tired artilleryman; and another was that he was evidently giving satisfaction in his labours. He was rapidly rising in the ladder of promotion. In January, 1915, he passed to the rank of corporal, and like others who have had similar luck, he recalls that he never experienced the joy of authority so keenly as in this, his first step upward. In March, 1915, he was promoted to be sergeant and platoon commander; in the latter part of 1915, which was spent in Volhynia (the Polish province of Wołyń) we are confronted by Ensign Beck the commander of a counter-attack Schock-platoon of artillerymen, which was quartered in the trenches together with the infantry. In the summer of that same year, 1915, when the three brigades of legionaries came together under the command of Marshal Piłsudski, the artillery batteries were also united, and finally, in the spring of 1916, Ensign Beck reached commissioned rank and was then transferred to the second artillery battery. Truly, a good record, and as in after days, when Poland had become an

independent State, he received the *Virtuti Militari* Cross, the highest Polish military decoration, it must be presumed that his record was so regarded by his superior officers as well. Nor did he escape altogether unscathed, for on July 4th, 1916, Lieutenant Beck was caught in a shell explosion, and considered himself lucky in escaping with only severe bruises and a slight head wound.

In this year of 1916, however, it was not only his bruises and head wound that troubled Lieutenant Beck; to these there had supervened troubles of a political character as well. The legionaries, it was evident, had done any work that fell to their share with daring impetuosity and valour, and the Heads of the German Military machine, beholding their military efficiency and beginning by this time to feel the drain in man power, entailed on them by the War, bethought themselves now that they were in the occupation of Warsaw that it would be a good thing if they could conscript many more Poles of the same quality to help to make a *Polnische Wehrmacht* which might enable them to win the War. Likewise the Austrian High Command were desirous of forming a *Polnische Hilfskorps*, obtaining a firmer and closer hold over the Polish Legionaries on their side. They had officially recognized them and they considered they were entitled to a corresponding measure of control. In itself this desire, especially on the part of Germany, was a remarkable justification of the policy

of Piłsudski in forming a Polish force which could be distinguished from the other forces in the field and which might form the nucleus of an army for Poland's emancipation. It is quite certain that if the Poles had been content each to be conscripted in his own part of Poland, some in Prussia, some in Russia, and some in Austria, there would have been no special attention bestowed on them by General Ludendorff, and no feeling that Poland would have to be specially placated by such a measure as the declaration of Polish independence in September, 1916, by Austria and Germany. The Poles were the only people for whose man-power the Central Empires felt that they would have to pay.

The German offers were meant to be tempting ones, and there were some of Piłsudski's officers who thought, although he himself had expressly forbidden it, that the legionaries might quite safely take such an oath of allegiance and continue their corporate existence as a part of the Austrian Army. Lieutenant Beck, however, was none of these. He must have been confirmed in his determination when it gradually appeared that the Polish independence offered by the Central Empires was of a delusive quality and was indeed intended to sooth rather than to satisfy. There was indeed never the faintest desire on the part of the Central Empires after they had occupied the Russian 'Congress Poland' to do more than to give it a certain autonomous and truncated existence. Indeed, it was not even united

for military purposes ; there was a part in German occupation and there was a part in Austrian occupation. In addition, indeed, there was some talk of Austria uniting Galicia with some part of Russian 'Congress Poland' in a state ruled by a scion of the Hapsburgs ; but this plan, as did most of the plans formed in regard to Poland, never eventuated in anything practical. Germany, too, had evidently no intention of letting go her hold on Poznan, and although it must again be repeated that, if it had not been for the desire to lay hold of that Polish man-power which had demonstrated its existence in the performances of the legionaries, it is certain that Germany would soon have discovered that no reason existed for promising independence to the Poles.

From the first, Piłsudski was wide awake to the hollowness of those so-called German concessions to Poland. As has been already pointed out, his programme envisaged not only the defeat of Russia by Germany, but the defeat of Germany by France. So when the Germans established a temporary Council of State for the regions around Warsaw under German occupation, he at first accepted office as Chairman of its Military Commission, but whenever he had verified the truth of his suspicions that what the Germans really wanted was to build up a Polish armed force, using, as a nucleus, the Legions which had now been transferred to German control by the Dual Monarchy, he at once resigned from

the Council of State, publicly proclaimed his distrust of the German policy, and reverted to the secret tactics of his revolutionary days by bringing into being an underground military organization known as the P.O.W. In the meantime there had happened the Russian Revolution, and this meant that one of Piłsudski's objectives had been attained by the obliteration of the old Russia.

There was thus no doubt in the mind of Piłsudski and his instructions were followed willingly by the overwhelming mass of the legionaries, that their role was now finished and it was time to disband. Lieutenant Beck had even at this early date fully entered into the mind of Piłsudski, and accordingly he joined with his companions in refusing to take the oath prescribed by the occupying authorities of 'fidelity in arms with the armies of Germany and Austro-Hungary.' At last the German authorities were thoroughly alarmed. They saw a force in opposition which was capable of blocking their lines of communication. Accordingly they were at once spurred into action. They arrested Piłsudski on July 21st, 1917, and imprisoned him in Magdeburg. They disbanded the Legions, and Lieutenant Beck was sent with other so-called mutineers to Radymin where General Schelling tried in vain to break the determination of the young lieutenant and his followers. When at last it was seen that all blandishments were in vain, and that the legionaries were not to be moved, some of them were interned, and others who had Austro-

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THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

Hungarian citizenship were drafted off to Austro-Hungarian units. Lieutenant Beck ultimately found himself in a Hungarian regiment with a temporary loss of commissioned rank.

After Pilsudski had been interned, Smigly-Rydz, now a Marshal of Poland, assumed command of the secret Polish military organization which was designed to act independently of the Central Powers. Its ramifications and posts covered the whole of Poland, and were also to be found in Russia and the Ukraine. Under Smigly-Rydz, too, it harassed the Austro-German lines of communication, immobilized German and Austrian troops, and everywhere played the part of an unofficial and secret, but distinctively Polish Army. In one of the public squares of Warsaw there is a memorial statue to the legionaries who in this great and notable work gave up their lives for the cause of liberty in Poland.

Lieutenant Beck, however, was one of those who survived to continue until the present hour. Although disbanded and, as it were, controlled, he had his eyes open for some fresh work to undertake for Poland, and his attention was at once drawn to the Polish formations which he heard were wandering about in the depths of Russia and Siberia.

CHAPTER V

A RUSSIAN INTERLUDE

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, as has been just indicated in the previous chapter, made a change in the disposition and outlook of the Polish Legionaries. Piłsudski had never wavered in his conviction that the old Russia, if she were suffered to survive, would prove the greatest and ultimately the most dangerous enemy to Poland. Germany, he was convinced, would be defeated in the War and accordingly the German power would for the time be broken ; but so long as the old Russia remained an influential force among the successful allied and associated Powers, so long would there be a Power fighting against the recognition of any real Polish independence. Indeed, Lord Balfour informed Colonel House in 1916 that an independent Poland would mean an end to the alliance between Russia and France and so the Allies could not contemplate it. It would be a buffer state interposed between Germany and Russia and would prevent Russia from operating effectively against Germany. Besides, as was made plain in the introductory paragraphs to this book, Russia had now

climbed up to a high place in the affections of a liberal and constitutional Britain. It was no longer the crass oppressor of the days of Palmerston and Lord John Russell; it was now the valued partner of an Entente Cordiale.

It is true that the old Russia had made promises to Poland dating from the very beginning of the War. The Grand Duke Nicholas issued a proclamation abounding in illusive rhetoric which although it created some impression in the West, awoke no corresponding echo in the minds of Pilsudski and his associates in the East. The Russian offer was a delusion and a sham. 'Autonomy' was the word used to express it as opposed to any real self-determination or independence. But when in the early part of 1917 a Kerensky government operated in the place of the Romanoffs it might have been supposed and indeed it was actually supposed that some part of the objective of the Polish Legions had actually been gained. Even if the Legions, because they were unwilling to take the Austrian oath, had been disbanded, might there not be a hope, now that the old Russian Army was being reorganized, that a bigger Polish Army, with its own Polish officers and its own Polish flag, should arise on Russian soil? It had been estimated at that time that there were 600,000 Poles with 20,000 officers and 119 generals under arms in Russia. What an opportunity for organizing a force which would stand up firm and true for Poland!

It is the best illustration of the enterprise and initiative which at that early age characterized the mind of Lieutenant Beck that he reacted immediately to what appeared a magnificent opportunity. Obscure news began to filter through to him in his uncongenial surroundings in the winter of 1917-1918 that Polish formations were beginning to rise out of the remnants of the old Russian Army. What was there to prevent such a result? The Poles had a common language, common traditions, and a great historic past. Tiny natural formations were appearing and disappearing in that swirling world in which the old Russia was collapsing and why should not the Polish flag form the greatest centre of unity? As a matter of fact, Kerensky was at first very much opposed to a Polish Army, and it was only after much hesitation that he authorized a single army corps. When the Bolsheviks, too, came into power in October, 1917, they were more anxious to Sovietize the Polish soldiers than to give them any facilities for forming a distinctive army.

Still, Lieutenant Beck was not to be denied. He obtained a few days' leave of absence and presented his plan of operation to the local head of Piłsudski's organization. It was cordially approved, and he was asked to wait for a few days until a courier should arrive with more news of the actual situation in Russia. But how was the young cadet to have his leave lengthened so that he might wait the arrival of this courier? Here,

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too, Beck was not destitute of resource. He knew that both in Germany and Austria-Hungary leave was most freely given to a student who had to face an examination, and so he went to his former Polytechnic Professor, Casimir Bartel, who afterwards became one of the Prime Ministers of Poland, and informed him of his plans and his difficulties. Professor Bartel was equal to the occasion, and immediately issued a certificate that Joseph Beck, a student of Lwów Polytechnic, had to remain in Lwów for an unspecified period on account of the claims of an examination. This certificate was accepted by the examination authorities, and so the young man obtained leave to remain for an extended time in Lwów.

But at length this extended period came to an end and the young lieutenant had to wend his steps in the direction of the Ukraine. For he was no longer the Lieutenant Beck who had dragged his artillery up and down the steep crags of Jabłonica. He was now a certain Mr. Halecki, with passport duly in order, and a stout heart prepared to endure all the perils that might meet him on his way. He, Halecki, had four companions with him, and their objective was Kieff; though in order to circumvent their foes they each sought the capital of the Ukraine by different ways. In accordance with the plan which had been formed by the young Beck before he was metamorphosed into Mr. Halecki, the leading idea was to form contact with the Third

Polish Army Corps of Dowbor Muśnicki, a General who had acquired a great reputation during the previous course of the War.

That was the main objective, but the perils in the path were many and forbidding. Halecki himself knew neither Russian nor Ukrainian, and what was he to do when he met wandering soldiers of either of these nationalities and was called on in a strange tongue to render an account of himself? Still, he soon had an example of how far had penetrated the influence of Piłsudski's secret Polish military organization. Just at the time of his greatest need when he had reached the town of Zbaraz he met the prior of a monastery who had enrolled with Piłsudski, and this man helped him to get to Wisniowiec in Volhynia in the guise and with the papers of a dealer in lard. But still he had not completely overcome his difficulties. Wisniowiec was in a ferment. Deserters from the Russian Army were living on the country and accosting in a hostile fashion everyone whom they met. Small detachments of soldiers from other nationalities were clashing with each other and producing Bedlam wherever they collided. Where was the dealer in lard to rest his wearied limbs? Soon a bright idea struck him. On the door of a local parsonage there was displayed a card with the inscription 'Typhus—keep out.' What is one man's poison is another man's meat. At least that is how it appeared to Mr. Halicki. He made for the house with the forbidding inscription,



MARSHAL PILSUDSKI AND COLONEL BECK ARRIVING AT GENEVA (1926)

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sought, and obtained a comfortable lodging, and found all to his heart's content before proceeding on his journey.

Yet trouble never ceased. A friendly vicar had come to administer the Last Sacraments to the dying parson, and it was decided that Mr. Halicki should depart from the house in the capacity of the vicar's coachman. In this capacity he got as far as Krzemieniec, still in the Ukraine; and from thence he made his way, by this time a perfect adept in adventure, to Stara-Sienawa. There he found the Third Polish Army Corps encamped, and having joined it, he fought in several battles with the Germans and Austrians who were against the recognition of Polish armed forces as such. But an obstinate and obdurate fate attended the operations of all these Polish forces—that of Dowbor-Muśnicki, that of Michaelis, and all the rest of them. They appeared, they flourished for a time, they were attacked, they were surrounded, and then they scattered and seemed lost to sight. The enterprise of Mr. Halicki had seemed to end in nothing but failure. And so it would if Mr. Halicki had not become Lieutenant Beck again, a young officer determined never to admit absolute failure or defeat.

Indeed, this was a notable milestone in the life of Lieutenant Beck. He had shown a rare gift of initiative when he first conceived this journey to the Ukraine, and now he was to show a still rarer gift of initiative in the

THE AUTHENTIC BIOGRAPHY OF COLONEL BECK

way he utilized his failures. He escaped from the hosts of enemy troops who had surrounded his Army Corps, and in June, 1918, he reported there to the chief of the local post of the Polish Military Organization which, being a secret body was known confidentially as 'K.N.3.' By this secret body he was sent with two companions to organize Polish military detachments in the heart of Russia, with instructions to communicate with the organization's post at Moscow in order to decide as to future action.

Moscow was at that time in the hands of the Bolsheviks, but Beck managed somehow to get into the city. He had picked up a smattering of Russian by that time, and his cool, collected manner enabled him to bluff his way through more than one danger. He learned from the local post that there were many Poles in a Bolshevik regiment in course of formation at Orel, in East Russia. So he at once went there, and, as he spoke German with a Viennese accent, he introduced himself to the Bolshevik Council as an Austrian prisoner of war from the Fourth Austrian Infantry Regiment. There had been a prison for political offenders at Orel, the inmates of which had regained their freedom during the revolution; and most of them were Polish independence workers amongst whom were a fair sprinkling of Socialists. When Beck reached Orel, authority in the city was fully in the hands of the released prisoners, and a Pole of the name of Kwapinski was the so-called governor of the district.

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Beck showed the instinct of command in inducing the regiment to accept him as their commander. He occupied this exalted but dangerous post for nineteen days—and in later times, often complained with a smile that this period had not been counted as front-line or military service in his record.

For men in authority, however, even for young men with their first taste of authority, difficulties never cease to accumulate. In the hey-day of his power, young Beck was warned that some one had denounced him to the local equivalent of the present-day OGPU, and he was obliged to escape. Detachments were sent out to capture him along all the roads leading to the Ukrainian frontier with orders to catch him, dead or alive. He was not caught, however, as he doubled on his tracks and returned to Moscow, where he lay low in the suburbs, sleeping at a different place every night, and eating as fortune enabled him. When the hue and cry had died down he proceeded to Kieff where he met Smigly-Rydz, the present Marshal of Poland, and Sokolnicki (now Polish Ambassador to Turkey), who were to establish contacts with the Polish Army in France through the intermediary of the Inter-Allied Staff in Roumania. Beck was appointed to take part in this mission; it was his first diplomatic work.

Upon his return to Kieff, Beck was made mobilization inspector of K.N.3, and he was ordered to proceed to Odessa in order to amass all that he could in the way of

Polish man-power. From Odessa he was to lead the group to Ploskirow, whence by easy stages he was to return to Poland. This order was carried out to the full. From Ploskirow, Lieutenant Beck in company with a single companion made the best of his way back to Poland with dispatches from General Rybinski. He took advantage of every possible means of communication offered, i.e. riding the buffers of freight trains, lying on the roof of railway cars, and bribing German sentries and posts to permit their passage. The last stage of the journey had better be given in his own words :

‘ We finally reached Poland. It was night, well below freezing point, and the wind was blowing great guns. The soldier who met us at the frontier was, of course, a Pole, but he aroused our ire and amused us at the same time. He reminded us rather of the immortal Tartarin de Tarascon. He was hung around with every conceivable kind of weapon and arm—a regular walking arsenal. He absolutely refused to wake his officer or to send us to the commander of the sector, but evinced a strong desire to clap us into the “jug” so as to be on the safe side. Perhaps his attitude was not so very surprising, taking our appearance and clothing into consideration. I had long knee-boots, green Russian breeches, a civilian overcoat, an ordinary cap, and in addition a black,

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A RUSSIAN INTERLUDE

wadded overcoat given me by some kind lady just before I left Odessa—it was a fine coat, silk lining and all that, but the sleeves reached only as far as my elbows.

‘We finally succeeded in convincing the martinet that we just had to proceed with our journey. What was more, we learned what had happened in Poland during our long stay in Russia and the Ukraine when we had been largely cut off from the rest of the world. It was there we learnt that on November 11th, 1918, a free and independent Poland had been restored and that all our efforts had not been in vain. We had been on the right path.’

On November 20th, Lieutenant Beck reported to Smigly-Rydz at Lublin and was instructed to form a battery of field artillery for the First Calvary Brigade which was about to leave for the front. The Bolsheviks were already attacking Poland, and, though the Great War had ended, the Polish Army had to continue fighting until the fall of 1920. Lieutenant Beck served as the commander of this battery under Belina and fought at the important battles of Dolhobyczow, Uhrynów, and Warez. Just after the last-named battle, Lieutenant Beck received orders which were really a culminating point of his fortunes. He was to come to Warsaw and report to Marshal Piłsudski.

CHAPTER VI

FROM FIELD TO FOREIGN OFFICE

MARSHAL PIŁSUDSKI WAS a born leader of men. He had that instinctive quality which comes to very few in a century—the quality of getting at once to the important facts of a situation and of disentangling the essentials from a whole host of irrelevant details. He was gruff as to his exterior, laconic and devastating in his speech, but withal he was possessed of a faculty which atoned for the defects of all these qualities. He could estimate and appraise men, he could attach those who were marked out by his approbation as by hoops of steel, and he thus enrolled himself among the ranks of those organizers who can initiate great works and have by a certain inexplicable magnetism gathered around them the men by whose co-operation they can fashion their plans to a successful issue.

This was the crowning attribute of the leader, then, who in February, 1919, summoned Lieutenant Beck to Warsaw to operate under his direct orders and to carry out work which he had specially designed. He was one of the youngest to be selected for such a task, and

there can be no doubt that the Marshal had been impressed by his Russian interlude and had discerned from his reports that he had the ability not only to manifest initiative in the prosecution of his work, but also to weigh up the elements of a complicated situation in the national life.

It is very interesting in chronicling the different posts assigned to Lieutenant Beck to watch the development of the Marshal's technique in sampling the powers of his new assistant. It was largely a plan of what might be termed 'Trial and Success.' You were set down to do a work and according as you did it to his mind or not, you were assigned to do another of this or that different kind. When he was the real Head of the State he changed the composition of the Cabinet after 1926 every year; and that he called 'changing the guard.' Even if you had done a work of a certain kind with evident success, however, it did not mean that you would afterwards be assigned a work of the same kind; for it might be that, in carrying out the first work, the Marshal had discerned qualities which, to his mind, specially fitted his subordinate to carry out a mission of quite another order.

This was the procedure, at any rate, in regard to Lieutenant Beck. He was first of all attached to a military mission which was proceeding to Roumania to negotiate for the passage of General Zeligowski's army through Bessarabia. It was thus connected with the

most important work of all during that troubled time—the collection and welding together of the scattered Polish forces so that they might be made a powerful and compact army to oblige the recognition of Polish rights and independence. This was the work that the youthful subaltern had tried to do in Russia, and though unsuccessful, Piłsudski had been so pleased with his reports that he set him, amid happier circumstances, to continue and help to complete such an indispensable effort.

His next commission—he was now a Major—was at an important and critical time—it might quite well be called one of Poland's hours of destiny. The Bolsheviks had encamped around Warsaw. Poland had looked disaster straight in the face and by a magnificent effort, known piously in after days as the 'miracle of Warsaw,' had thrown back the foe in confusion. It was during the brilliant northern offensive in this critical war—the last before the Bolsheviks sued for peace—that Major Beck was summoned by Piłsudski to the front as the Chief of a Department on his staff. He was received by the Marshal at the railway depot in Warsaw with the following words: "I am making you chief of the Second Department. Very risky work, I warn you. I have had two chiefs in that department. The first one I promised degradation should he inform me wrongly. The second one, that I would have him shot. The task before you now is the most risky—I have got

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to think out some really terrible penalty for you." He thought for a moment as if pondering the issue and then he smiled with that smile which showed that the Marshal liked you best even when his words seemed gruffest and his jokes heaviest. "I will hand you," he added, "over to the Opposition Party for impeachment in the Sejm."

The Marshal, however, was really beginning now to discern the *métier* of his man, for it is significant that, after the armistice was signed with the Soviet Union, Major Beck was next entrusted with a diplomatic mission to Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary. This work he must have done to the Marshal's liking for when he returned he was called in the dead of night, during the early spring of 1921, to join a Polish mission which was leaving within twenty-four hours, in order to hold a Polish-Lithuanian Conference at Brussels. Major Beck was to act as the military delegate-plenipotentiary. It was an independent mission as far as he was concerned, as there was no other officer on the Polish side. Major Beck saluted and respectfully informed the Marshal that he knew nothing of Lithuanian affairs. "That's all right," exclaimed Piłsudski in reply, "all you've got to do is to remember the general lines of our policy, not to worry about the details of various Tinyvilles and other hole-in-the-corner places as the alleged experts do."

Some months later, towards the end of 1921, Marshal

Pilsudski was pondering whom to appoint as the first official military attaché at Paris and Brussels. Colonel Wieniawa-Dlugoszowski, now Polish Ambassador at Rome, proposed Major Beck, and the Marshal willingly agreed to the suggestion. Then it was that the Major served as the Attaché at the Paris Embassy from January, 1922, until late in the fall of 1923. He thus appeared definitely embarked on a diplomatic career. But he was not to go straight on from strength to strength, for it was just at that period, when he had hardly been little more than a year in his new office, that Marshal Pilsudski retired for a time from public life.

Poland had found herself confronted during the first few years of her independent life with a very complicated task. There she was, fitted up out of three different parts of three different empires, each part having lived under different systems of law, and each having had a different coinage and a different political system. The fields of her peasants had been laid waste. Her communications were disorganized. Marks, roubles, and kronen circulated in the country, but their value was low and uncertain. Bolshevik Russia, as appeared even in the earlier days of the last chapter, exercised an unsettling influence on the Polish masses. How was order to be evoked out of this apparent chaos? Now without political, financial, and economic troubles of a very serious order: and the man at the end of affairs had to

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assume very serious administrative responsibilities. Yet Piłsudski as Head of the State had no very definite position or powers with which to confront such an enormous task.

Such was the Poland to which there came the new Constitution in 1921, and Piłsudski liked the situation none the less. That was the time when all the nations in Europe which had a new Constitution to formulate were enamoured of the idea of making the world, in President Wilson's significant phrase, "Safe for democracy," and when they avoided as they would a hateful pestilence anything that savoured the least of dictatorship. The first Polish Constitution did not accordingly grant very extended powers to the President of the Polish Republic. He was quite definitely nearer to the French than to the American President. He had no powers to deal with an emergency by issuing decrees or administrative ordinances. Now Piłsudski felt strongly that the situation was one demanding centralized power and a quick decision, and the Presidential Chair did not appear to offer him the opportunities of carrying his ideas strongly into action. So the former Chief of the State refused to consider the office to which the people would have called him, and, passing into retirement, occupied himself in his country retreat with writing his book on the Polish-Bolshevik War and the Battle of Warsaw in 1920.

It is remarkable proof of the extent to which now the

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fortunes of Major Beck had been attached to those of the Marshal that he, too, having been recalled from Paris, asked leave to resign his commission, and worked for some time on the Warsaw branch of the Wilno Bank. He did not, however, remain in steady contact with the Marshal. Only on one occasion did Pilsudski invite him, and that for a single day to his country retreat to check up notes concerning the information gleaned by the Polish General Staff as to the Soviet Army during the last offensive of the war in 1920. However, he saw Pilsudski for a second time when he had occasion to consult him regarding an invitation he had received to participate in higher special training courses for war-time officers. On this occasion Pilsudski showed plainly that he did not desire his old officers to go out of active service even if only for a time, and the result was that the Major resumed his military work with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, being in fact attached to the Fifth Horse Artillery Division at Cracow. From this post he was transferred to the General Staff Academy, and when he emerged from it at the end of his training he was second on the examination list. He was then appointed to the Third Department of the Supreme War Council.

It was while he occupied this position that he heard stirring news. Away in his country farm-house the old warrior Pilsudski had been more and more chafing as to the actual situation. Purely Parliamentary Democracy had hardly been a success in Poland. The political

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parties were many and the Parliamentary combinations boundless. Ministers followed one another in quick succession on the Parliamentary scene. The Pact of Locarno had shown that the Western Powers, whatever they might do to help each other in the West, had made up their minds to take no joint responsibility for the European East. Polish public opinion was profoundly moved at it all, and there were many voices calling for the emergence again into public life of the old Marshal. The latter himself became more and more inclined in favour of some decisive coup. His comments on politics and politicians assumed an increasingly acrid tone. He was specially annoyed when he heard that there was some proposal afoot to take away or limit the independence of the army command, for the independence of the army was a leading article of his constitutional creed. The result of all these mingled sources of irritation was that he could bear it no longer. He emerged from his retirement and showed himself to the people again, and Lieutenant-Colonel Beck heard that he had been assigned to the personal orders of Piłsudski in connection with the military demonstration planned by him.

Now it was plain how much he was trusted by Piłsudski and that he was, in fact, marked out for higher and higher stages of promotion. At once he was nominated Chief of Staff to the Marshal and for three days and three nights worked ceaselessly together with him without a wink of sleep. Not that the ultimate issue

of the coup was ever in doubt. The Marshal had entwined himself too firmly in the affections of the Polish people for that. Still Colonel Beck remembers to this day that period as in the literal sense a very painful one. He had to wear his high riding-boots continuously all these three days and three nights; and when the situation was cleared and his orderly came to take off the boots, it was found that the only way of doing this was to cut the leather through. Barely had he done this and composed himself for sleep when he was again called to his Chief. He went, hobbling along on two sticks and barely able to walk. But Piłsudski had still important work for him to do. He had selected Colonel Beck as his representative in the crowning act of this coup—the conversations with the then President Wojciechowski, and seeing he could not walk, he himself telephoned appropriate instructions.

A few days later the Lieutenant-Colonel was again summoned before the Marshal, and it became quite plain that Piłsudski had finally destined him for politics and diplomacy rather than war or strategy. "I'd like," said the Marshal, with that gruff manner which as often as not concealed a real affection, "to have you as the Chef de Cabinet in the Ministry of War, but I know that will kill you as a decent operations officer. This is the last time I give you the right to choose. Let me know to-morrow—I don't like people who take too much time to think things over."

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Lieutenant-Colonel Beck did not take too much time to think it over, and he served for four years as Chef de Cabinet to the Minister of War, who was Marshal Piłsudski. Then came a still more dramatic move. When Colonel Slawek resigned from the post of Premier in August, 1930, President Mościcki suggested that Marshal Piłsudski take his place. By this time the Constitution had been amended in two fundamental respects, (1) the President could dissolve Parliament, (2) he could issue emergency decrees or administrative ordinances subject to approval by Parliament after the event. The connection between the President and the Marshal had always been very close, and when the President made this suggestion to him he now saw no major difficulties in the way. Only he proposed that, as an indispensable condition, he should co-opt Colonel Beck as Minister without portfolio and Vice-Premier. He asked whether the other Ministers had any objection to this, but warned them that in any event none of them would receive the post. Thus it happened that Colonel Beck became acting Premier and co-ordinated all the work of the various Ministries.

On November 2nd, 1932, the Colonel was nominated Minister of Foreign Affairs, and has occupied this post ever since. No one who has followed the course of the narrative in this and the preceding chapters can wonder that Piłsudski made this nomination. Indeed, there were some who thought it a degradation from the

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higher post of Vice-Premier. But Pilsudski knew his man ; and there is not wanting evidence as has already been pointed out, that even before this time, the Marshal had designed him for some responsible post in the region of diplomacy.

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CHAPTER VII

THE MINISTER AT HOME

IT IS BARELY a year since Colonel Beck, as Foreign Minister of Poland, moved into his new home at the beautiful eighteenth-century Bruehl Palace. Before that he spent more than four years during his term of office in the Raczyński Palace, an edifice of less architectural beauty and splendour, but with just as many historical associations connected with it. The Minister used to say that he felt quite at home in the Palace, and even took a great fancy to it. He added that it was pleasant to receive the envoys of other countries in a palace which had centuries of tradition behind it, traditions of Polish culture and art. He seemed to fit into the historical walls, was at home amidst the antique furniture and the old tapestries, and did not even seriously disagree with the ghosts which legend reports in all such old structures. Colonel Beck felt quite at ease with these troubled spirits. Indeed, he said, with a smile, that he lived at peace with them and was always ready to accept their friendly warnings.

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At home in the Raczynski Palace, Colonel Beck spent most of his time in his study as a matter of course; but his few hours of leisure were most willingly spent in his arm-chair at the fireplace in the large, red-walled reception room. When the time came to move to new quarters he most regretted his place before the hearth; perhaps unconsciously, under the influence of the memory that there he had more time for rest than would be the case, if the forecasts were correct, in his new home.

The new home of the Foreign Minister was planned by the architect so that it should be situated under the great ball-room in the pavilion by the side of the old Saxon Garden. It is connected by an internal staircase direct with the Minister's chancellery, with the result that work never ends but is only transferred to the living quarters. Moreover, the new house is in ultra-modern style so that the consolations of dwelling with the associations of the past are absent, and modernity, the pressure of up-to-date current events, is stressed by the very environment. Often the light in the Minister's study burns far into the night, and even after Colonel Beck has retired for a well-earned sleep he is always liable to be awakened by an urgent telephone call or cable message. As this state of affairs lasts throughout the whole year, any vacation longer than a few days' duration is hardly ever possible.

Yet somehow the Minister appears in sharper relief,

THE MINISTER AT HOME

more harshly perhaps, in his up-to-date surroundings than when viewed against the mellow background of the Raczynski Palace interiors. But this may be pure imagination. At any rate, Colonel Beck was in October, 1938, already installed in his new home, and he was then passing through the preliminary stages of the diplomatic struggle for the recovery of Cieszyn; so that times were then naturally rather tense.

Colonel and Mrs. Beck's living quarters are situated on the first floor which from the side of the garden really becomes a fairly high ground floor; doors lead from the rooms on to the terrace. The servants' quarters, kitchens, etc., are below.

You enter the hall and the first look around reveals an arm-chair pushed back from the table, a fire still burning in the fireplace, while the general aspect of the place indicates that this is where the inhabitants of the house most willingly assemble. Photographs are on the mantelpiece: one is Marshal Piłsudski, and the other Colonel Beck himself, in a white yachting shirt at the wheel of his motor boat. Two telephones are beside the hearth and a radio receiver in the corner of the hall. This seems conclusively to indicate that the central point of the home is here. Another arm-chair before the fireplace, and on the table before it are some official envelopes and an ash-tray with several half-consumed cigarettes.

The high doors which lead to the Minister's study

have some special significance of their own ; when open, they seem hospitable and inviting ; but closed, when Colonel Beck is in conference or busy dictating, they seem actually forbidding. You are glad to see the doors are open.

The study is rather small, but with a high ceiling, like a room in any of the modern private apartments in the suburbs. The walls are plain, painted a neutral tone. On one of the walls you see a crayon portrait of Marshal Piłsudski, executed long before the War and probably in those Victorian times when men still wore beards, for that is how the Marshal is depicted here. On the other walls there is quite a collection of framed autographed photographs—of kings and dictators ; this must be the official wall of the study. On the Minister's desk there are placed two photographs, Mrs. Beck and her daughter, to give the redeeming softer touch to this otherwise severely businesslike work-room.

There is a bookcase on either side of the fireplace and you naturally examine the contents. One can tell much from the literary tastes of a man : for a whole shelf is devoted to works on the sea, the navy and the mercantile marine. Historical memoirs, monographs, books on the Polish legions and on the army, works dealing with Piłsudski, the Marshal's letters and writings in Polish and in translations, books about Piłsudski, a complete set of Joseph Conrad's works, the history of Poland, works on her relations with other countries and so on.



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Among these finely-bound volumes there are some which are unbound, but with pages cut and obviously frequently read. On the window-sill there is a large, old book in magnificent leather binding ; it contains, we are told, a collection of maps. It appears that Colonel Beck likes old maps and this atlas was bought by him during a stay in Denmark as it contained several interesting maps of the old Polish Commonwealth.

You return to the hall and pass to the drawing-room. Here there are no signs of work. In one of the cabinets we notice a collection of artistic folk-dolls and bric-à-brac, and there is a framed letter signed by Kościuszko resting on a splendid example of seventeenth-century Polish brocade shot with gold threads. And here, too, is the piano. It has an important role in this house. The Minister likes and understands music, he knows what music he likes and when he wants to hear it. For there are times when he wants no music at all ; he says that music sometimes acts in a dangerous manner. But, considered as a mode of relaxation after hard and arduous work, Colonel Beck believes nothing surpasses it. He has an excellent ear for music and in this respect takes after his parents.

If you are fortunate you may be invited by Madame Beck into the small drawing-room. It belongs to the strictly private part of the home and serves for chats with friends. It is comfortably furnished and looks most cosy. But, as there is little time for quiet chats with

friends in this home, the little room gives the air of being somewhat abandoned, as very seldom used.

Perhaps you may then speak of the discoveries one can make regarding people and their habits during an examination of their home. Or you may ask Madame Beck for aid in arranging the 'interview.' With a smile she may then point to the upper shelf of her bookcase: "You'll find all you need there," she will tell you, "if you're thinking of writing a contribution on the family history of the Becks."

Accordingly you examine two framed photographs of amateur snapshots and pass to the model of an old sixteenth-century galleon. A tablet hanging from the poop explains that a certain Bartholomew Beck landed troops at Elbing during King Stephen Batory's clash with the Danzigers. "This is a model of the Polish flagship during the Battle of Oliwa," explains Madame Beck; "it is a gift from the Danzig Poles."

That seems to mean that the Becks came to Poland from Flanders through Danzig. So does history repeat itself and come around in full circle.

You, of course, have a look at the collection of family photographs: Joseph Beck as a little schoolboy; Joseph Beck in the uniform of a non-commissioned officer of the legions and—very specially—a snapshot of a family group. In this one the amateur photographer must have forgotten to warn the group that he was about to snap the scene, for we see Joseph Beck as a youth

carefully and gently wrapping a shawl around his grandmother's shoulders.

At this juncture, however, the butler announces that Colonel Beck has come and that dinner is served. The menu is very simple: radishes, wholewheat bread, tomato juice (vodka for those who want it), some noodles, vegetables and *compote*.

You speak about current happenings, but avoid affairs of State. Mrs. Beck gives a lively description of a visit she paid that day, while Colonel Beck listens carefully and smiles from time to time.

This visit which the reader is taking to Colonel Beck's home is supposed to take place just before the Cieszyn-Silesian affair was settled; but nothing seemed to indicate that a period of the greatest tension was imminent. On the contrary, the atmosphere was quite tranquil and carefree, as it should always be after dinner. And then, suddenly, the arrival of one of the ambassadors was announced. It was not perhaps a very important conference, but one could see from the expression of the Minister's face that he had in a flash adjusted his psychological attitude to current affairs.

It now remains to describe a normal work-day in the life of Colonel Beck. The first official business reaches him while he is still at home, so that a great deal has been settled before he goes to the Ministry and begins to receive visitors. After a morning at the Ministry he goes home to lunch, often taking with him one or other

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of the officials to discuss matters which have not yet been settled. After his coffee he rests about two hours, lying on the sofa or driving out in his car, often in company of his son. During those excursions he most willingly visits the outlying parts of Warsaw, since he is most interested in the rapid growth and development of the capital. At five or at six o'clock at the latest he resumes his work.

If by any chance the evening is fairly free, Colonel Beck prefers to spend it at home. He is not a movie or theatre fan, for he finds their programmes too long and boring for a man accustomed to intensive work. Of the films which he has seen, Sherriff's *Journey's End*, and *Bengal Lancer*, appear to have made the greatest impression on him. He often mentions these productions; and, soldier as he is at heart, regrets that there have not been more like them.

It is, however, in the late evening and night that the Minister works most intensively. He has followed this custom for a great many years and in particular the habit was strengthened during the period when he collaborated so closely with Marshal Piłsudski.

Night in the house at the Bruehl Palace, indeed, begins very late, usually well after midnight. In spite of his late hours, however, Colonel Beck does not immediately go to bed after finishing his work. Evening is the time when he snatches the opportunity of catching up with his reading and, as he is often greatly in arrears, this

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operation generally lengthens out into the small hours. There are a number of serious books in his bedroom, and one of lighter content. The latter may be a good detective yarn or one of Grey Owl's books, but in any case it must afford relaxation and rest. The consequence is that now he is in a condition when tired nature can exact her fee from him. And so, at last, to bed !

CHAPTER VIII

THE MINISTER AT WORK

A FOREIGN MINISTER nowadays, of any great country, answers in a very real sense to one of Plato's famous phrases. He is in most ways a : "Spectator of all time and existence." His envoys people the vast extent of the world. He himself, like a spider in its web, sits in his desk at the centre of a great reticulated maze of visible and invisible lines of communication, connecting him, as they certainly do, with every part and portion of a universe of great causes, idle stratagems and subtle plans and plots. He keeps his ear alert to it all, he weighs up the this and that of it, and future historians find in the reports of his envoys the best clue to the genuine ideas and policies of the particular State to which that envoy is accredited. So it was that when Colonel Beck was established in his chair at the Polish Foreign Office, as Europe's tallest and most taciturn Foreign Minister, he found himself immediately face to face with such a baffling and bewildering scene. Yet at once he made his work pleasanter and more fruitful by inspiring the confidence and respect of the envoys who were to supply

him with the means of understanding it. The telephones on his desk and a light signal connecting with his secretary were the only outward symbols of his connection with the great outer world. They were the evidences that he could telephone to his ambassadors at their distant posts and communicate to them directly what he wanted them to do. That was, indeed, a great evidence of power; but telephone calls, cables and coded telegrams do not constitute the sole means of communication between a minister and his collaborators. The ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiary of the Polish Republic, to-day, remain also in contact with their Chief, thanks to the virtue of an invisible thread, which is, however, more desirable and reliable than wires or the ether—and that is reciprocal understanding, the fullest confidence and the careful preparation of every plan of action.

“Politics are conducted by means of people; for everything is ultimately done by people.” This is an aphorism which Colonel Beck often quotes, and it testifies to the importance which he ascribes to the proper selection of his coadjutors. Such a selection, however, is not all: for he also devotes much attention to imbuing these envoys with those concepts which he has formulated and these ideals which he continues to serve.

It is for this reason that the Minister attaches so much importance to personal contacts with the staff of the Ministry and with the chiefs of Poland's diplomatic agencies abroad. Without any orders or circulars being

issued, it has become an accepted practice for Polish envoys to spend their vacations in Poland, in order to secure direct contacts with the work of the Minister and the Ministry. There was a time when some of these envoys remained away from Warsaw for ten or more years on end, but this no longer holds good.

On his part, Colonel Beck never grudges the time necessary 'to work up a subject' with one of his envoys and to convince him as to the justice of his thesis. It almost seems as if the Colonel cannot believe his orders will be properly executed unless they are backed up by the profound conviction, of the envoy in question, that his instructions are purposeful and wise. As one of the Polish envoys to the Scandinavian countries was leaving the Council Chamber, after a conference with the Foreign Minister, he is reported to have said: "I am loaded up and have my course charted out for a whole year."

Colonel Beck's frequent contacts with his envoys abroad and with the principal officials of his Ministry have yet another object in view. He desires to create what he calls a special 'Polish style of foreign service,' and has done much to bring it about. He fully realizes that certain external features can have much influence on the shaping of foreign views on Poland.

At the same time, Colonel Beck considers that the style of Polish diplomacy should reach farther down than mere externals. It should primarily be made evident in the mode of political thought which it follows.

In this field Colonel Beck attaches great importance to independent judgments and originality of thought. An official who presents what he has to report logically, and yet concisely in simple style, always gains the approbation of the Chief. This system of collaboration ensures a far-reaching understanding between the Minister and his subordinates; and then, when momentous occasions arise, when decisions have to be made from hour to hour, and incoming news should flow ceaselessly and abundantly, the telephone comes in, and very efficiently supplements the coded-telegram service.

Short reports, instructions framed in concise phrases, comprehensible only for those who have worked together for years and understand each other—these constitute the basis of the work done. When, during the crisis over the recovery of Cieszyn-Silesia, telephone communication was cut off, Colonel Beck arranged at once for aeroplane services to maintain contact with the Polish Legation at Prague. For example, the decisive note which Papée, the Polish envoy, presented to the Czechoslovak Government was delivered in this way. By all possible means, then, the maintenance of a good liaison service has been considered of paramount importance by the Minister. There is a constant influx and efflux of news between the Ministry and the diplomatic posts of Poland in other countries.

In the light of what has been already said, it will be obvious that Colonel Beck has a sufficient knowledge of

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his subordinates and that he keeps strictly to the rule of having the right man in the right place. When the time comes to fill a post, the first step is to effect a precise definition of the tasks which have to be carried out, and the next thing is to discover a suitable type of man for the special work envisaged. In addition, when drawing up instructions, there has to be taken into account the mentality and psychology of the worker who has to carry them out.

The system of work followed leaves Colonel Beck's envoys and other collaborators a great deal of freedom of action and initiative. Discipline is exacted only in the strict execution of orders and instructions ; where no precise indications are given, the individuality of the given envoy is given full rein.

At the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs too, and apart from work during official hours, officials often work far into the night when the need arises. This is not, for that matter, brought about by orders or instructions. Very frequently, when some urgent matter has cropped up, the Minister issues orders for the mobilization of some department or section after hours only to learn that the persons affected have turned up at their desks without any special call. It is typical of the personnel of the Ministry that it does not work by the clock ; all the Ministers take a personal and direct interest in the efficiency and success of their work. When the Polish-Czechoslovak crisis broke out, the

need arose for night shifts: and so many volunteers offered their services that the great majority had to be refused.

Colonel Beck is considered to be an exacting chief, one, too, who cannot bear lack of discipline. But his subordinates also know that he will always stand up for them and invariably protect them from the unpleasant consequences which sometimes arise from the execution of their duties. Accordingly the personnel of the Ministry uniformly testify that their collaboration with Colonel Beck is not only pleasant and satisfying, but also highly interesting. They trust his political wisdom and fully accept a share in the responsibility which attaches to his far-reaching and constructive plans.

The Minister devotes much care and attention to the political conversations conducted by him. Although the list of persons seeking an audience is usually exceedingly long, a relatively small number of people are received on any given day. The reason for this is that Colonel Beck does not like haphazard, unprepared conversations on important political affairs. Every political conversation has the nature of a political operation, precisely thought out, elaborated and verified as to details. Colonel Beck is highly endowed with the ability to conduct political conversations and remembers the principle that 'diplomacy is made by chatting.'

Those who have collaborated with Colonel Beck for some time know how many subtle points he can bring

out during such conversations. He always conducts them in tactful fashion, leading his partner on to the subjects convenient for him and avoiding undesirable ones. But in case of need he boldly deals with the most difficult queries put to him. Once when a foreign diplomat asked him something and admitted in advance that he was perhaps indiscreet, the Minister replied in the words of Oscar Wilde's famous aphorism: "Questions are never indiscreet, answers sometimes are."

As you further watch the Minister in his dealings with many different varieties of men you gradually acquire a knowledge of his nature as a whole. He is intensely ambitious, yearns to play a great role, and does not 'suffer fools gladly.' Sometimes he gives offence on this account, for he is himself quick to discern the real core of a question, and he has no patience for those who miss their goal through getting entangled in barren and pedantic formulas. Perhaps that is why he is credited with a certain dislike of lawyers.

He has not much sense of humour, if by humour is meant a rollicking and good-natured tolerance of the ups and downs of life. On the other hand, he has a great deal of what the French call *esprit*, and his ironical and caustic comments sometimes penetrate to that deeper side of life where the comic abuts on the tragic. Like all men who feel they have a big role to play, he cherishes a certain amount of resentment which at times

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gets dangerously near to pique when he encounters a lack of recognition, as witness, for example, the fact that, because of things that had happened in the past, he would not go down to the station at Warsaw to meet M. Barthou when the French statesman came on a mission to Poland. But all these qualities and the defects of these qualities are suffused and ennobled by a religion of honour, the inspiring force of which was revealed in the peroration with which he concluded his speech in the Sejm when announcing the British Guarantee.

Thus it is that from his grey-walled study in the beautiful old Bruehl Palace which houses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Colonel Beck surveys the army of his envoys and collaborators throughout the whole world. Nor must it escape our observation that two portraits hang on the walls of this room, connecting together the past and the present of the long history of Poland. One is King Stephen Batory, conspicuous among the elected rulers and warriors of the old Polish Commonwealth, and the other—Marshal Piłsudski. These are his leaders and teachers, and it is to them that he turns for inspiration and support in times of trouble and crisis.

CHAPTER IX

THE MINISTER AND POLAND'S POLICY

COLONEL BECK WAS now firmly installed in the Polish Foreign Office. His telephones and telegraph wires connected him with every important part of the known world. He had to his hands a skilled and devoted army of envoys who made him aware of all the unexpected and often startling events which frequently gave a new turn to the history of the world. How would he use these great powers which had been committed to his charge? A Foreign Secretary of any important European country has obviously in his hands the power of peace or war. He can have his country surrounded by its friends or overwhelmed in danger and defeat. The world is now smaller than it has ever been because of the very extended means of communication which are now at the disposal of its peoples. What is the concern of one nation easily becomes the concern of all the other nations, so that the Foreign Minister of one nation quickly becomes the arbiter of peace of all the rest.

The new Polish Minister was very modest as to his

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own use of the powers which were now in his possession. "Our foreign policy," he once said, "is the application to international problems of the realist and constructive thought of Marshal Piłsudski." And in a sense, as has already been made abundantly clear in the book, Colonel Beck was made and moulded all throughout the earlier part of his career by the first Marshal of Poland. It was that great power Piłsudski possessed of seeing into the hearts of men which guided him in taking his Foreign Minister away from the active service of the army and sending him on this or another diplomatic mission. It was the faculty of the Marshal for discerning the trend and future course of events which gave Poland's policy in the earlier official career of Colonel Beck its power and effectiveness in Europe. But while the Colonel was essentially a loyal disciple and follower of his distinguished master this fact must not blind us to the discovery that in all things the new Foreign Minister made Piłsudski's thought his own. He passed it through his individual mind, he expressed it in short epigrammatic and pregnant phrases which lingered in the memory, and when on May 12th, 1935, Piłsudski passed away, he was able to continue it with unabated vigour and success. Two of the most thorny problems of Poland's foreign policy—the settlement of the Cieszyn problem with Czechoslovakia and the restoration of diplomatic relations with Lithuania—both questions of great import to Marshal Piłsudski, but which were left

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unsettled at his death—were met and effectively decided by Colonel Beck when he had been deprived of the Marshal's guidance and advice.

There can be no doubt whatever that, at the time when Colonel Beck took up the reins of office, the outstanding problem of Polish politics was one of extraordinary difficulty. It arose from the contrast between the real power and potentialities of Poland and the estimate which had come to be put on her by the Western democracies, and especially by Great Britain, and, to a lesser extent, by the United States of America. In reality Poland, to use the expressive phraseology of the first Napoleon, was "the key to the European vault." In the nineteenth century, as has been set forth in the introduction, she was a soul wandering forth in search of her body and thus sowing all throughout Europe the seeds of insurrection and unrest. Her wide and spacious plains in the twentieth century separated Russia from Germany and prevented these nations, as they surely would otherwise, from getting at each other's throat and thus dragging the whole world into international conflict. In contrast with other great nations whose populations were declining or stationary the population of Poland was steadily increasing and holding forth the prospect that she still might be more powerful proportionately as compared with them. Indeed, from a rapid survey of the position of Poland in the nineteenth and twentieth century, it may fairly be concluded that a

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partitioned or oppressed Poland meant no peace but always a sword in Europe, while a strong, satisfied, strongly supported Poland meant that in the east, the real European storm centre, there was an independent Power which, by separating the main combatants, stood always for stability and peace.

Over against this real position and importance of Poland stood the position to which she appeared to have been relegated by some influential sections of public opinion in Great Britain. This Polish country, one of the largest in Europe in point of area and population, had come to be classed among the smaller and minor nations which had hardly any right to a policy of their own, and which had received their independence as a beneficent gift by reason of exertions in war by those who were infinitely stronger and more powerful than themselves. The ancient Polish frontier of the Pomorze, more than half the size of Belgium, was christened under such influences as the 'Corridor' *par excellence*, and by nine out of ten of the publicists of Great Britain was regarded as a narrow strip of essentially German territory illegitimately and intolerably dividing Prussia into two separate areas. The classical expression of this attitude of mind was the Locarno Treaty in 1925, which in view of its subsequent history must surely now be regarded as most unfortunate in its influences on European peace and especially in the cause of European disarmament. For this Locarno Treaty appeared to imply that, in the

view of British Diplomacy, Europe could be roughly divided into two parts: the Western part where conditions were tolerably settled and where Great Britain could give her binding guarantee, and the Eastern part which so far as Great Britain was concerned things were still in a flux, or at any rate where the threatened areas were too far off in space for Great Britain to be called upon to make any great sacrifices for their defence in days of emergency.

Of course the main Locarno Treaty was accompanied by accessory Treaties where France was brought in to guarantee Poland on the Eastern front, but this, so far as the self-respect of Poland was concerned, made her position in Great Britain even worse. France was now commonly represented as the protector of Poland; Poland was the 'satellite' of France. France was the predominant partner, Poland was the minor State whom she saved from trouble and aggression. Now there was a sense in which the ties which united France with Poland, ties arising from long past intercourse and experience, were more close and intimate than those which united her with any other nation. France had been the friend of Poland in the negotiations which succeeded the Great War. As the official correspondence relating to the Locarno Treaty abundantly proves, M. Briand made unavailing efforts to widen the scope of the main Locarno Treaty so as in some degree to relate it to the Eastern front of Europe as well. All this was

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appreciated and remembered in Poland ; but the friendship between the two countries was always regarded—in Poland at any rate—as a friendship of equal to equal—not as that of protector to protected. Indeed, it was when France was understood to have assented to the Four-Power Pact that the largest amount of resentment to that country was felt in Poland.

Besides, as the narrative in the previous chapters has abundantly proved, it was the main object of the policy and actions of Marshal Piłsudski during and after the Great War to give Poland just that strong and self-respecting position which would enable her to claim as a right what otherwise might have been bestowed on her as a gift. For that the brigades of legionaries had crossed the Austrian frontier on their difficult and dangerous quest. For that the young subaltern Beck had made his journey to Siberia in an effort to unite the scattered Polish units whom he found wandering about in that land of exile. The new Foreign Minister in short, both by training and his own individual acceptance of the plans of Piłsudski during the course of the Great War, was bound to regard the policy of Poland when he took his seat in the Foreign Office as being not pro-French or pro-German or in the interest of any other Power, but as being above all and predominantly pro-Polish.

Not many months however after the new Foreign Minister had got seated in the saddle he had an experi-

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ence which revealed at once the difficulties of the task before him and the need of making it palpably plain that Poland was no longer to be treated as a mere negligible factor in the European situation. In March of 1933 particulars began to be available of what was termed the Four-Power Pact, surely one of the most ill-conceived and dangerous of the many unsuccessful proposals championed in the interest of European Peace by the late Ramsay MacDonald. The League of Nations was beginning to drag along uneasily at Geneva. It was plain to the Polish observers that it was petering out to a very feeble flame. The French had brought forward a scheme of disarmament and mutual assistance with a League army to quell the aggressor. Ramsay MacDonald who could never see that such schemes were all of a piece and that if you subtracted one factor from them, the total value was next to nothing, replied to the French by his own pet scheme of Disarmament, with armies limited to 200,000 men and a strict and differential rationing of armaments as between nation and nation. This scheme, as it was joined to no proposals for tightening Collective Security, surely meant that war was as imminent as before, only that it was to be waged with fewer weapons of less calibre, and where one country which had been baptized at the outset as 'smaller' was put at a disadvantage in relation to an aggressive neighbour, by having an army strictly limited in numbers as compared with that particular neighbour. Of course it



COLONEL BECK AS MINISTER SIGNING THE RUMANIAN TREATY

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failed to attract the votes at Geneva; whereupon Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Simon hied themselves to Rome at the invitation of Mussolini, and there it was that the Four-Power Pact was born.

There was a great deal of mystery about this proposal of a Four-Power Pact. Ramsay MacDonald was, in particular, extremely evasive as to its scope in the House of Commons. But it was plain that it touched the Polish ideas and sentiments at a very tender point. Marshal Pilsudski, in particular, was bound to conclude that it went against all these efforts which he had made, both during and after the War, to build up Poland as a Power to be considered in the economy of the future. In effect it made four Powers: Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, a kind of Directory presumably to revise treaties and carve out a new Europe according to their own sweet wills. The old Polish Marshal saw that it would never do and set out to consider fresh methods outside of Geneva, whereby the Polish nation could be vindicated and secured. Colonel Beck, his Foreign Minister, afterwards crystallized his own individual reaction in the significant slogan: "Nothing about us without us."¹ This in a very real sense is an abstract and epitome of the whole tenor and import of Polish policy during the course of his subsequent career.

¹ The Polish of this is: "*Nic o nas bez nas.*" It is one of those few slogans which do not lose by translation.

The times were indeed critical for the new Foreign Secretary. The League, as has been seen, was on the downward path, and towards the end of 1933 Germany left it. On the other hand, Hitler had been very loud and uncompromising in his claims on Poland. In the early part of 1933 he said that the so-called Corridor was a "hideous injustice" to Germany. There were ugly incidents in Danzig which at one time moved Piłsudski to send Polish troops, beyond the number allowed in the Treaty of Versailles, to occupy the Westerplatte. Colonel Beck was unmoved by all the resonant clamour of these events. "Frontiers," he remarked in one of his epigrammatic phrases, "are not changed by words." Piłsudski, too, was resolute and firm. He reviewed troops at Wilno and sounded France to no effect on the possibilities of a preventive war. He was quite convinced, with that intuition into the course of events which never failed him, that Hitler was destined to become a predominant force in Germany notwithstanding the tardy fashion in which he seemed to be climbing to power in successive general elections. So Colonel Beck set to work as a negotiator, and towards the end of 1933 an agreement was made possible, which, for the time, alleviated the situation in Danzig. Then Mr. Lipski was appointed to Berlin and the result was the Polish-German agreement of 1934.

"Every treaty," said Colonel Beck in that speech on May 9th, 1939, which drew forth resounding cheers

from the Sejm and deeply impressed the opinion of Great Britain, "is worth as much as the consequences which flow from it." If ever this pithy statement was justified in history it was justified in the consequence which emerged in Great Britain from the Polish-German agreement of 1934. At first British public opinion was stunned with surprise. The cartoon 'La Polonaise,' which has been reprinted from *Punch*, though not appearing at this time, seems very adequately to express the feelings which at that time surged in the public breast. Poland had now done something distinctive in the eyes of the world. Her Foreign Minister had attracted the attention of the European chancelleries. But was 'La Polonaise' not simply skating on the ice? Was she not making herself the dupe of Hitler? Was the German Chancellor not playing with her as the cat plays with the mouse? These questions are quite in the spirit of the first British reactions to this noteworthy agreement; but as the days went on, and it was discovered that Hitler was duly honouring it, when the torrent of German propaganda which under the Weimar Republic had flowed madly in a heavy stream suddenly stopped, as if its main source had been tapped, then it began to be recognized that, even though the agreement were to be denounced when it had only half run its course, it had already succeeded in its main object. Publicists who had proclaimed that the so-called Corridor could never be held by Poland and that a day of reckon-

ing was inevitably near, were now forced to admit that by the admission of Germany herself she could get along without the Corridor for the space of ten whole years. Later on they were destined to hear the German Chancellor go further still and admit that an outlet to the sea, such as the province of the Pomorze provided, was a necessity to Poland and could reasonably be demanded as an essential part of her economy. Now, and only now, could it be conceded that the Polish Foreign Minister was on an even way to repair the fundamental mistake of the Treaty of Locarno.

But even those who were compelled to admit that Polish foreign policy had started on a new and more promising path were slow to grasp the ultimate implications of this new venture in Europe. In France there were some who accused Poland of being false to her old friends, and in Great Britain others who believed that Poland was undermining the whole basis of the League of Nations. If these critics, however, had but studied carefully this new instrument of policy they would have seen that it carefully reserves and excepts from the scope of the new agreement all previous undertakings into which the two high contracting States had entered. Indeed, it is not difficult, after this space of time, to work out the main motives which led Marshal Piłsudski to consent to an agreement in such a form. Collective security was fading away into a nonentity. The old order was changing. Poland, as it were, had to begin

again and ask herself how she was to inaugurate a policy predominantly pro-Polish. There she was, astride the Great European Plain, with Germany on the west and Russia on the east. With Russia, Poland had already concluded a Treaty of Non-aggression. There now remained Germany. Mr. Lipski set before Germany the issues of peace and war. Germany chose peace, Poland was accordingly put in more tolerable neighbourly relations with her two adjacent Powers. But both these agreements—that with Russia and that with Germany—were, as Colonel Beck always put it, bilateral. It was not possible for Germany on that account to contend that the arrangement with Russia was part of a plan of encirclement. That was why the Poles never quite understood the policy of Czechoslovakia either in its Little Entente or in the pact with the Soviet as part of a general Franco-Czecho-Soviet alliance. In such adventure the Czechs were antagonizing Germany on a vital issue by providing ground for the allegation that they were uniting with the Bolsheviks, Germany's main enemy, in an effort after encirclement. So it was that, on a consideration both of its internal constitution and its outward alliances, Colonel Beck formed a poor opinion of the chances of survival of the Czechoslovak State. "Czechoslovakia?"—he was heard to exclaim in June, 1937, when he returned from a visit to King Carol in the company of President Mościcki—"Czechoslovakia, as a caricature of the Austro-Hungarian

Monarchy (without the Hapsburgs), will not last longer than eighteen months." Yet it was only three and half years before that Dr. Benes, speaking of this same country, exclaimed that its 'frontiers were fixed for ever.'

It was, however, by such prophetic glimpses into the future that Colonel Beck showed that he had now obtained a firm grasp of the policy of bilateral agreements. He travelled, on its behalf, all over Europe. From Paris to Moscow, in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, in Roumania and Hungary, Rome and Belgrade, Great Britain and Germany, he wended his way; and the result, always, was some statement of common end and aims which was evidence that his mission had not been undertaken in vain. The visit to London in 1936 was especially noteworthy. He came to a country where opinion previously had been of a somewhat mixed character, and he left it after signing a statement, jointly with Mr. Eden, to the effect that they were glad to find a conformity of views and desires on the part of the two governments. Nor did this tremendous activity of his awaken, at that time, any suspicion or animosity on the part of Germany. The policy was too well conceived and too adequately supported for that. Indeed, all throughout those numerous pilgrimages Germany was uncommonly friendly. Marshal Goering hunted in the forest of Białowieza, and Colonel Beck visited Berlin. For these bilateral agreements interfered with no pre-

vious international engagements. They could never be accused of being connected with some ambitious scheme of encirclement. Again and again Colonel Beck declared that he would be no party to a policy which divided Europe into two ideological camps. That was why he thought that there should be no attempt to seek extended fields of activity for a now-truncated League of Nations. Only the nations of a certain ideological variety were now most prominent at Geneva, and to seek a merely nominal resuscitation of the League at such a time by strengthening the force of its sanctions would certainly have meant that Europe would soon be plunged into a big ideological war.

By the beginning of 1935, however, it had become plain that this policy of bilateral agreements was having its effect and that, notwithstanding many undoubted causes of irritation in Europe, the situation, as a Polish Memorandum of September 27th, 1934, put it, 'had changed from one of trouble to one of appeasement and equilibrium.' That was fortunate for Colonel Beck, because Marshal Piłsudski, his teacher and main inspirer of his policy, was sickening unto death and actually passed away—as already mentioned—on May 12th, 1935. But before his death he had seen the successful application of the policy to two questions which vehemently excited European opinion at that particular time, the proposal for an Eastern Pact and the action of Poland at the League of Nations which finally resulted in her dis-

entanglement from the operation of the Minorities' Treaty. The Eastern Pact was otherwise known as the Eastern Locarno, and though at first meant to include Germany, was, on her refusal to join, to be inaugurated with Russia, France, Poland, Lithuania and Czechoslovakia. From the outset Poland was definitely opposed, not only because it included Lithuania and Czechoslovakia, with whom she was hardly on the friendliest relations at the time, but because it was antagonizing Germany by bringing together a League of States, which, without her adhesion and membership, might easily be regarded as attempting a plan of encirclement. On the Minorities problem, again, it was a question of a partial application of the maxim: 'Nothing about us without us.' Poland did not object to the provisions of the Minorities' Treaties as provisions for the protection of Minority rights. She had, in part, embodied similar principles in her own Constitution. But she objected to the League of Nations setting some nations on the pillory whilst others escaped scot-free. Why should Poland, for example, be bound down by such a treaty, and Germany, except in Silesia under the Geneva Convention, be excepted from it? Accordingly, when the League refused to call a conference to arrange a General Convention on Minorities, there was nothing left for Colonel Beck but to announce that: 'pending the introduction of a general and uniform system for the protection of Minorities, my Government is compelled to refuse all

co-operation with the international organizations in the matter of the supervision of the application by Poland of the system of Minority protection.'

Of course, there were protests and a Minority speech by Sir John Simon, but it was, at that time, fairly evident that the aim of the Piłsudski policy was rapidly being attained and that its initiator had passed away on the eve of an epoch of real triumph. On May 21st, 1935, Hitler said that he would renew the Polish-German agreement. On July 3rd of the same year Beck was in Berlin. Later on Poland was re-elected to the Council of the League of Nations by an impressive majority. The consequence was that the Polish Foreign Minister, in the first speech he delivered to the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Sejm after the death of Piłsudski, was able to assume an attitude of assured confidence and precision. He spoke of the good relations between Poland and Great Britain. He pointed out that Poland had been loyal to the League of Nations on the question of sanctions and that, so long as the League was recognized by the majority of nations, Poland was committed as much, but not more, than the others. Owing, however, to the League's lack of universality bilateral agreements had come to the front, but "Whoever desires our co-operation," said he, "must first come to an understanding with us." So far, he was stating the cardinal principles of his policy; but the most significant portion of this speech, so far as subsequent events were concerned, was its references to

Lithuania and Czechoslovakia. "Should I," he declared, "after a detailed examination of the case, ascertain that the Lithuanian Government are still taking part persistently in financing terrorist activity in Poland, we shall have to recognize Lithuania as an element dangerous to peace." In regard to Czechoslovakia, he concluded his speech by saying that the treatment of Poles in Czechoslovakia had long disturbed the public opinion in Poland and that relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia would depend on the answer to the question how Poles were being treated by the latter country.

Colonel Beck had evidently a clear hold of his policy, and on March 14th, 1936, when the Council of the League met, he had a golden opportunity of expounding its import and implications. About a week before that date Hitler had reoccupied the Demilitarized Zone of the Rhineland and had thus repudiated the relevant parts of the Versailles and Locarno Treaties. France sounded Poland on the subject of this repudiation and Poland replied that she would honour her obligations. Soon, however, it was found that the British Government were inclined to overlook Hitler's breaches of agreement, believing that, with the other Locarno Powers, but not including Poland, they could make some new arrangement with Hitler which would partake of the character of an 'appeasement.' This touched Colonel Beck at a very sensitive part, and at the ensuing public meeting of the Council of the League he delivered a clear and vigorous

speech which is, in some sense, an elucidation of the leading idea of his policy. He began by noting the Polish reaction to this Locarno Pact which Germany had repudiated and showed how Poland had never been enthusiastic about it, for the simple reason that it conveyed the impression that Eastern Europe had been left in doubtful security. Still, they had made the best of the bad situation thus created by a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee with France within the Locarno Pact and afterwards by the policy inaugurated by the Polish-German agreement. He then mentioned the Polish-German treaty of non-aggression and went on to declare that Poland attached the greatest importance to the strengthening of good relations between the Locarno Powers, but then—and here is a crucial moment of his speech: “Nothing about us without us.” Indeed, he went even further and maintained that no country, whatever its relative importance, should be made the subject of international negotiations without the participation of that country in such negotiations. There was no opportunity, on this occasion, of giving this dictum an immediate application, for the German peace plan did not win approval: but when France circulated a counter-plan which, amongst other things, proposed that the League should set up a European Commission for establishing regional pacts in Europe, it was felt clearly in Polish circles that this plan would have been much improved, so far as Eastern Europe was concerned, had

there been some prior consultations with the Powers in that area.

Thus it was that Poland vindicated her claim to be considered in the future economy of Europe and this narrative has shown how, through a varied series of events, Colonel Beck has consistently demonstrated the relevancy of his maxim: "Nothing about us without us." As we approach the last two years, however, it becomes more difficult to see events in their real perspective from a detached point of view, because we ourselves are caught up in them and, as it were, entangled in their coils. But there are three events of our own day which so added to the reputation of Colonel Beck in Poland, and are so significant in themselves that, though all their consequences may not yet be disclosed, this narrative would be painfully incomplete without a mention of them. The first was the resumption of diplomatic intercourse with Lithuania, the second the restitution of Cieszyn-Silesia, and the third—the British Guarantee.

The relations of Poland and Lithuania in regard to the old and venerated town of Wilno had poisoned the atmosphere in the East of Europe ever since the end of the Great War. Everybody who has been in Wilno knows that there are comparatively few Lithuanians in the town itself and that you may walk from end to end of it without hearing a word spoken in the very distinctive Lithuanian speech. But large sections of Western opinion confused the smaller ethnological

Lithuania carved out by the Treaty of Versailles with the old historical Duchy of Lithuania which formed a steadfast and enduring union with Poland and of which Wilno was the ancient and renowned capital. The new Lithuania, which had Kaunas (Kowno) as the capital, appeared rather to trade on this confusion, and at any rate its demand for the restitution of Wilno became so clamant that at times the continued reiteration appeared very like to an oratorical obsession. These people would have no truck with Poland. They declared themselves in 'a sort of war' with their bigger neighbour, and their frontiers were closed so that a Pole could not travel directly from Wilno to Kaunas. Frontier incidents were frequent. As we have seen, Colonel Beck had had occasion to warn them very explicitly; and there was no saying what complications might not arise if such a troublesome sore were allowed to fester in the East of Europe. It was moreover a trouble which deeply touched the spirit of Marshal Piłsudski. He himself was a Lithuanian; Wilno was to him something of a family town; and despite all the provocation which Lithuania had given him, it is an open secret that when Marshal Goering had sounded him about a German aggression by way of Memel, he replied that Poland could not disinterest herself from the fate of Lithuania. But the relations of Poland and Lithuania remained still inharmonious at his death, until at the beginning of 1938 Colonel Beck felt that the time had come for prompt

action by way even of an ultimatum. It is said that a talkative lady once inquired of Marshal Joffre: "As a matter of fact, Marshal, who really won the battle of the Marne?" The Marshal pondered this point for a moment, and then quietly replied: "I really don't know, madame, but I know for certain who might have lost it." Such a consideration must have been present to the Polish Foreign Minister when Marshal Smigly-Rydz massed his troops skilfully on the Lithuanian frontier. Had Lithuania resisted and had the Polish troops marched into Lithuania, the consequences would have been incalculable. But Lithuania did not resist; and so this action seemingly peremptory and stern was one which, above all, was justified by its success. Only a few weeks ago the Lithuanian Commander-in-Chief paid a visit to Warsaw, and a controversy of many years' standing has apparently at last been silenced.

The trouble about Cieszyn was much more formidable and a great deal more lamentable. Here were two nations living side by side, both Slavs, and the speech of one so near to the other that the people of the one could understand the other, and yet ever since the War they have lived together, although separated and estranged so far as their Governments were concerned. The difference dated from 1919 when the Czechs, taking advantage of the fact that the Poles were expending all their strength on their fight with the Bolsheviks, went in and took possession of this territory of Cieszyn-Silesia,

small, indeed, but important for its minerals and as a centre of communication. It was inhabited by a majority of Poles—of that there can be no possible doubt—but the Czech leaders were influential enough in 1919 and afterwards to get their seizure of this Polish territory confirmed by the Allied authorities. That was the beginning of a state of tension between Poland and Czechoslovakia which grew more aggravated year by year. There were constant complaints which aroused great resentment in Poland about what was alleged to be the bad treatment of the Polish majority in the disputed province; Poles were expelled from Czechoslovakia and Czechs from Poland. Consuls had their exequatur withdrawn on each of the sides; and all that Dr. Benes could do in reply was, as has been already mentioned, to proclaim that the Czech 'frontiers were fixed for ever,' or to propose to submit to arbitration any causes of complaint although the governing facts had already been made apparent to the world. Besides, Poland could never understand the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia, especially during the time that Colonel Beck was Foreign Minister. Czechoslovakia was the heart and soul of the Little Entente which appeared to repose on the supposition that the principal danger to the peace in Eastern Europe was a return of the Hapsburgs, whereas Poland was clearly of opinion that it was Germany rather than a return of the Hapsburgs that had most to be considered. Besides, Czechoslovakia had ignored Germany

and had entered into an alliance with both Soviet Russia and France which, just because it ignored Germany, gave to that alliance an appearance of encirclement.

On considerations like these, Colonel Beck, as has already been indicated above, had a poor opinion of the relative stability of the Czechoslovakian State. But that does not mean that he had any intention to contribute to that instability ; and when we deal with his action which terminated in the restitution to Poland of Cieszyn-Silesia, it is necessary to go over very carefully the course of events if we are to understand how the question presented itself to the Polish Minister. To begin with, the occasion of his action was not an invented one ; he did not determine to seek in cold blood an occasion to wipe off old scores with Czechoslovakia and then to present an ultimatum point-blank at her face. The occasion was already there when the Sudeten Germans began to put forward demands which every day seemed to get bolder and more uncompromising and which in the end involved a passionate call for incorporation into what they called their Heimat, that is, for absorption into the German Reich. At first it was supposed that the demands could be settled by negotiation before they became too extreme, but when Mr. Chamberlain returned from Berchtesgaden, after his first interview with Hitler, he reported that the German Chancellor was determined to go to war if the demands of the Sudeten Germans, as they were made at that time, could not be met. Then the two Western



democracies took up the tale and a last effort was made to settle the question by negotiation, first by Mr. Chamberlain alone, at Godesberg, and then by Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain, at Munich. This was the point at which the whole proceedings became of absorbing interest to Poland and to its Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck. For the meeting at Munich was, in effect, a revival of the Four-Power Conference, and this came within the scope of Beck's fundamental maxim: "Nothing about us without us." Poland, as we have already seen, had a grievance of her own against Czechoslovakia; but there was no evidence that this Four-Power Conference was ready to consider it, or, if they had been ready, that they would have been willing to take Poland on terms of equality into their councils. Hitler, it is true, in one of his speeches at any rate, acknowledged the justice of the Polish claims, but he also indicated that he was ready to take no steps actively to support them. Accordingly, there appeared to be nothing for it but that Poland should take matters into her own hands, and this Colonel Beck proceeded to do; but he was so desirous to make his actions a continuation of the proceedings at Munich that, when Czechoslovakia acceded to his demands, he timed his operations for the occupation of Cieszyn so that they should coincide with the time-table of Germany, as it had been settled at the Four-Power Conference. In all this, the Polish Foreign Minister was undoubtedly taking a certain amount of

risk ; for if the Czechs had been obdurate, and the Polish forces had been obliged to fight, the consequences would have been difficult to forecast. On the other hand, if the Polish Minister had not taken this action, and Germany had occupied the Sudeten territory and guaranteed the rest of Czechoslovakia, or, as the event showed, established a protectorate over it, then, if Poland had desired the restitution of Cieszyn, she would have had to come, cap in hand, to Germany, who would have undoubtedly demanded a *quid pro quo*. From such considerations, then, it must be admitted that Colonel Beck's management of this tangled affair was timely and skilful and the cheers which he obtained, when he spoke on the subject in the Polish Sejm, showed how much his prompt diplomacy had been appreciated by his fellow-countrymen. Nor must it be supposed that had France and Great Britain subsequently come to the conclusion that Hitler's encroachments on Czechoslovakia must be resisted by force, Poland would have been found acting on the side of Germany. Colonel Beck's record is perfectly clear on that point. When Germany's march in the Rhineland was the subject of conversation by the Locarno Powers, the Polish Foreign Minister, although he had no favourable feelings to their exclusive methods or to the Pact of Locarno itself, was perfectly willing to join in vigorous action to punish the aggressor. In such circumstances he felt his course clear and there is no ground for thinking that he would have joined Germany

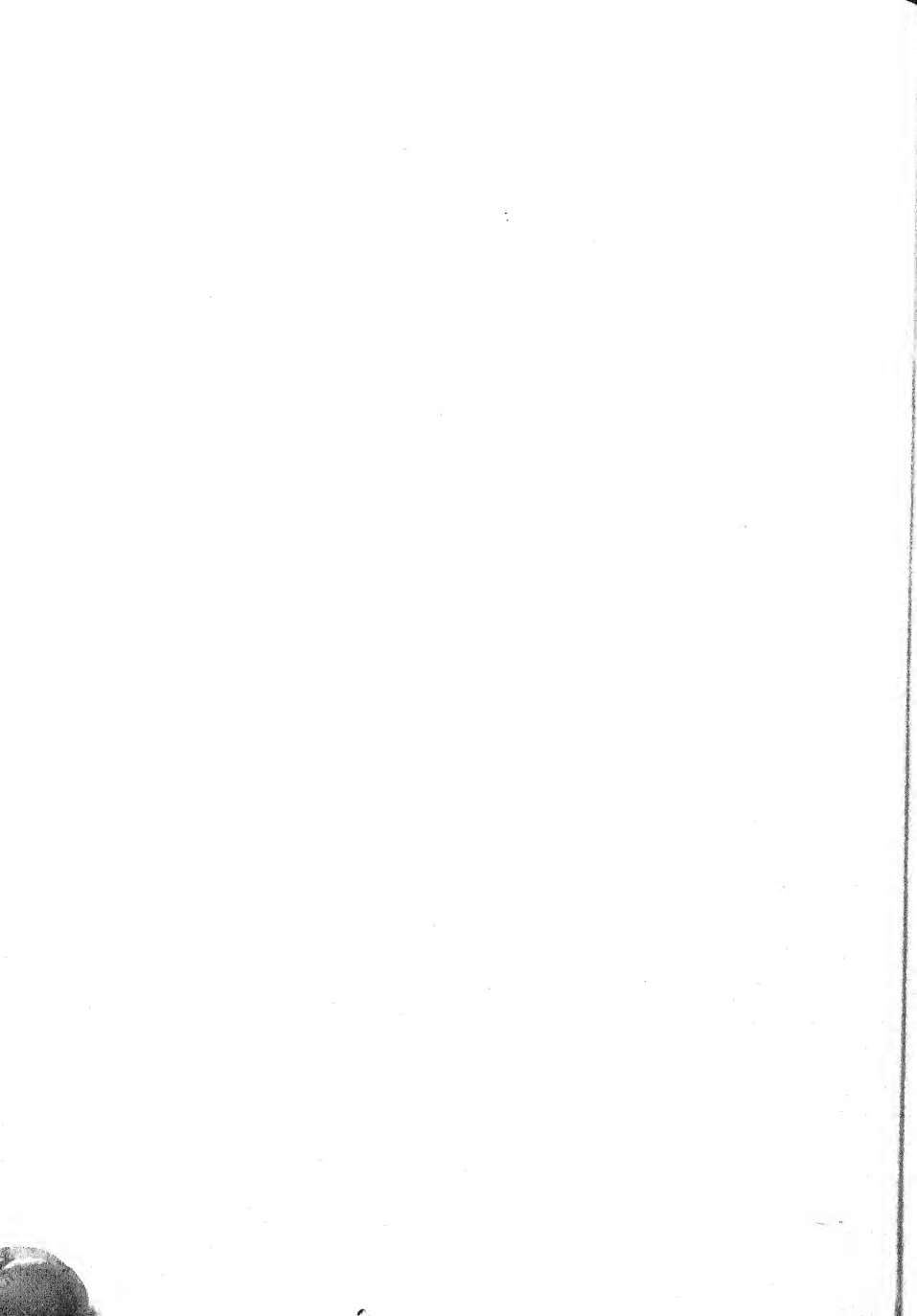
in any scheme for the partition of Czechoslovakia. To him, the restitution of Cieszyn-Silesia was simply the settlement of a problem bequeathed to him by Marshal Piłsudski, or, as he put it in his speech to the Sejm on that occasion, "the restoration of Cieszyn-Silesia, that ancient Polish land, within the frontiers of the Republic."

The last exemplification of Colonel Beck's diplomacy which can be taken up in this book is the Anglo-Polish Agreement and certainly it constitutes a very fitting conclusion to this estimate of a policy. For, as has been pointed out in our introductory remarks, the relations between Great Britain and Poland have hitherto been of a curiously mixed character. In the earlier and middle years of the nineteenth century Poland was the rallying call in Britain for all who loved liberty and hated despotism. In 1863 the Trade Unions were willing that their country should fight for the Polish cause; and lecturers went all over the country telling of Poland's many struggles for freedom. Then came a pause, when it appeared to be in the interest of the country to cultivate relations with Russia, even though at times it was chafing for Liberal governments to do so, and though Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, at a later date, was compelled to cry out: "The Duma is dead! Long live the Duma!" At the beginning of the War there were not many in England who thought of Poland, and at the Peace Conference, and afterwards, it seems certainly true that she had not enlisted any surplus of sympathy on the

part of Mr. Lloyd George. Later on, as has been already shown in the course of this narrative, the situation grew even worse; and it required the Polish-German agreement of 1924 to start a movement in the reverse direction, which made it possible for Mr. Chamberlain, on April 6th, 1939, to say, regarding his conversations with Colonel Beck: "The conversations with M. Beck have covered a wide field and shown that the two Governments are in complete agreement upon certain general principles." This was a most significant statement and the change it produced in the popular estimate of Poland is reflected in the last cartoon reproduced in this book.

Later on, in the evening of the same day on which Mr. Chamberlain made this statement, Colonel Beck elucidated that fundamental principle of Polish policy which he had made it possible to reach so happy an agreement. 'Polish policy,' he said, 'had been quite simple in the past. Poland did not conclude contradictory pacts; and now when she was enlarging her obligations, she had not done anything that contradicted any previous agreement.' Has not the truth of this confident claim been verified by the whole later course of the narrative in this chapter? It is this principle of his that enabled Colonel Beck to steer a clear and peaceful course in his many diplomatic journeys throughout Europe at a time when Europe was experiencing—to use Mr. Chamberlain's phrase—'times of great tension.'

It is true that Germany took umbrage at the Anglo-Polish Agreement and that Herr Hitler consequently denounced the Polish-German Agreement; but this denunciation was entirely unilateral, and by the time it was made the latter agreement had accomplished a great part of its work. If, then, Germany has again raised the cry of encirclement against Poland, it must be replied that the encirclement has been of Germany's making. Colonel Beck, indeed, furnished a complete vindication of himself in that speech of May 5th, 1939, which was delivered amid approving cheers from the Polish Sejm, and which so favourably impressed public opinion in Great Britain. It was firm and yet open to agreement; resolute and yet clearing a way to that diplomatic negotiation in which the Colonel has ever been an adept. It was, moreover, replete with those short and pithy phrases which Colonel Beck has always used to commend his policy to the Polish people, and with one or two of these this book can fitly close: 'Every Treaty is worth as much as the consequences which flow from it'; 'It is not our custom to make bargains with the interest of others'; 'A self-respecting nation does not make one-sided concessions'; 'We in Poland do not know the conception of peace at any price. There is only one thing in the life of men, nations, and states, which is without price, and that is HONOUR!'



APPENDIX

CONTAINING extracts from an article and speeches of Colonel Beck which throw a side-light on his life and illustrate the development of his policy.





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LA POLONAISE



INTRODUCTION

THE EXTRACTS WHICH have now been translated are of the greatest possible interest for clearly understanding the leading principles which animated the official career of Colonel Beck. The speeches are not orations, in the accepted use of the word. They make no appeal to emotion except perhaps in the concluding paragraphs of the address to the Polish Diplomatic Service and in the peroration to the last of them, which shows how much suppressed feeling may lie hid in the heart of a soldier. They are at times laconic, and at times tortuous; but there is a distinct thread of consistency running through them all, and they show that Colonel Beck was from the very first sure of the ideas which had been instilled in him by Marshal Piłsudski and that he saw his way to carry them out in a coherent line of policy.

The first article has an intense personal interest. There is a certain irony in the fact that on a day dear to the heart of every Pole—November 11th, 1918, when Poland emerged a resuscitated State from the Great War—Colonel Beck was engaged in the Russian adventure recorded in the previous pages, when every day

was filled with danger, but every day was pretty nearly the same as the day that had gone before. Poland had risen again and her future Foreign Secretary did not know of it. November 11th, 1918, had dawned, but to him it was a kind of *dies non*, a day which he cannot now separate from its neighbours in the stirring catalogue of his past.

As will be seen, his speeches began with one which defines Poland's relations to Russia and Germany. With Russia there was a non-aggression pact, and "our attitude towards Germany will be the same as Germany's attitude towards Poland." Then we come to the Four-Power Pact—very important as showing the main influences which pervaded his mind; and this is closely followed by that important speech which told the Sejm how there had been concluded a Polish-German Pact. Somewhat interesting, too, in the light of later events, is the fact that this speech concludes by noting an improvement in Poland's relations with the Free City of Danzig.

Thereafter we get entangled in the long series of movements and counter-movements which, during 1935, and especially 1936, diversified the face of Europe. Russia entered the League, Barthou visited Moscow. Poland took her action at the League on the Minorities Treaty. We hear about the so-called Eastern Locarno and why Poland could not join it; and then, after dealing briefly with Abyssinia, we have an exposition of

the Foreign Secretary's ideas on the evil result of ideological warfare.

The speeches from the seventh onward are specially important at the present time. They show visits to London and a continually increasing understanding between Great Britain and Poland. Incidentally, we have references to the question of Jewish emigration, which, because of the decreased quatum of Jews to Palestine, had become an important subject of negotiation between Great Britain and Poland. In the eleventh speech delivered before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Seym, on January 10th, 1938, Colonel Beck, after a brief consideration of Poland's relations at that time with Russia and Germany, concluded ominously that the international situation had become more tense, but, he added cheerfully, Poland had suffered least from it. In this speech, also, will be found some of his ideas on the future of the League.

The series fitly ends with the speech of May 5th, 1939, which, in its broadcast form, with a record of his very words and the approving cheers of the Seym, made such a palpable impression on the minds of the British people.



I

A LOST DAY

FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE 'GAZETA POLSKA' OF
NOVEMBER 11TH, 1932

NOVEMBER 11TH, 1918, has remained a turning point in the history of Poland. Yet when I look back and try to place that date as an outstanding moment of my private life, I am at a loss to find it. My memory recalls a sequence of cold days, with wind and snow, a seemingly endless road, railway stations crowded with malodorous sheepskin coats, along railway tracks running across the Ukraine, and the tin helmets of German sentries, who had to be avoided. Which of these days was November 11th? I could not tell.

When, during the first days of November, 1918, I reported on my return from the inspection to Kula at Kieff, feeling sure that I should be sent back to my country, I was asked to stay on. Patting my back in his quiet manner, and addressing me as 'brother,' he ordered me to proceed to Odessa, there to gather anything that was possible, to mobilize the members of the Polish military organization, and to take a detachment to

Ploskirow, collecting on my way any Poles from among the former Russian prisoners, from any loafers, or from the ranks of those patriots who were willing to desert from the Austrian Army. After I had done this, I should be free to return to my country.

I spent a few days in Odessa, but do not remember much of that beautiful city. I lodged somewhere in the industrial district, and slept on a 'sympathetic' sofa in the dining-room of some no less kind follower of our cause. Together with Major Gigel-Mellechowicz, General Rybinski, and Lieutenant Hildt, we held many conferences in various 'digs,' and after much hunting, we collected a small band of men. The journey to Ploskirow passed off without greater difficulties. The occupation of the Imperial and Royal Austrian Army was going to rack and ruin. The *Feld-Gendarmerie* and the Local Command were still moving, but with the movements of a man struggling with death. At Ploskirow, Muszkiel-Krolikowski took over my company, which, though not numerous, was a fine body of men. That was probably between November 6th and 8th. From there, only two of us, Hildt and I, were to go back.

The territory beyond the Zbrucz was occupied by the Ukrainians, who were in a state of war with Poland, though the latter had not yet been officially born. Our route was to lead us in the direction of Dubno-Kovel, and thither did we travel.

But it would not be correct to say that we travelled.

Of course we made use of the trains, where we sat on buffers or on roofs. We had continually to come down and climb up again. After one day of this kind of travelling, we lost all the luggage that we had left. Documents had disappeared long before, or rather, there were two things which could still be used here as documents, a Browning revolver and the remains of the *Karbowaniec*, *Kierenka*, and the *Ost-rouble*,¹ with which we had been provided in Odessa. The German occupation, whose dominion started a few score kilometres north of Ploskirow, did not get out of joint as the Austrian had done. On the contrary, it was as if a spasm of fury had made more efficient all the springs of its mechanism.

The German sentries were worse than ever. We had to pay our way by doubling the bribes. The cold was biting. It was comparatively comfortable when we could find a place in the human crowd outside the wagon. But when we had to go out our lips were chapped with cold.

Our last twenty roubles were taken from us by the German patrol when we were nearing Kovel. When they asked for my papers, which I had not got, I hesitated whether to reach for my gun or part with my last coin. I decided to reach for my money, and it worked. However, at Kovel, Hildt and I had to parade in front of the buffet of the Army of Occupation, where there was a

¹ These are names of war-time money which was then used in these parts.

display of dry rolls, bits of sausages of doubtful appearance, and German cigars. There we paraded, hungry and furious.

We reached 'Poland' at last on a cold windy night, arriving at Maciejow. The soldier who met us was at once moving, amusing, and annoying. He reminded us of Tartarin de Tarascon; he carried an odd assortment of arms; he would not wake the officer, nor would he send us to the Commander of that section, and he was obviously inclined to put us under lock and key, just to make sure. This was far from surprising, considering our dress and appearance. I wore jack-boots, green Russian breeches, a 'civilian' tunic, a sports cap, and a black evening overcoat, which had been offered to me by some compassionate soul at the last moment just before we left Odessa. True, the coat was silk-lined, but the sleeves reached only to my elbows.

Finally, we managed to convince that stiff warrior that we had to proceed farther. We even succeeded in finding out what had happened in this country during our wanderings.

Here my recollections of the journey with which the date of November 11th, 1918, is associated, actually end. The journey had reached its termination. We knew it from the first words of that stubborn soldier at Maciejow.

Which of the days spent on that constantly changing road was November 11th? I could not say that now. I had lost that day during the march.

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II

EXPOSÉ MADE TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE SEYM ON FEBRUARY 15TH, 1933

REFERENCE TO NON-AGGRESSION PACT WITH RUSSIA, TO LEAGUE
AND DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE—RELATIONS WITH GERMANY
PRIOR TO NON-AGGRESSION AGREEMENT—"OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS
GERMANY WILL BE THE SAME AS GERMANY'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS
POLAND."

THE WHOLE OF last year and the beginning of the present one have been marked by a series of major and minor international conferences. Our role in these international actions has assumed different forms and a different scope, according to the area and subject which these actions have in view.

The tendencies of our policy can be expressed most clearly and directly in our bilateral relations and agreements. As the area of the problems extends, we must, of course, set ourselves certain limits in proportion to our strength and means, without, however, renouncing our proper right to have a say in questions of a more general nature.

In the first and simplest group of our actions, I should like to mention before all else a serious step forward in our relations with our neighbours. I refer to the pact of non-aggression and the conciliation agreement with the U.S.S.R. For several reasons I attach great importance to that step. To my mind this diplomatic act is a sound form of agreement, because it has confirmed and consolidated in a visible form the favourable development that had already taken place in the relations between the two countries. On the other hand it has the value of an example, showing as it does that, with consistent effort and good will on the part of those concerned, suitable forms for defining the progress in international life can always be found. It is a fortunate circumstance which adds to the value of that agreement that similar agreements were concluded at the same time between the U.S.S.R. and the three Baltic States, which owing to their geographical position are just as close to the U.S.S.R. as to Poland; and also that the Government of our French ally has arranged its relations with the Soviet Union on the same principles. In these circumstances this whole system of pacts assumes a more general importance and it can be said that we have in this way made our contribution to the general effort to create a favourable atmosphere for international work.

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in the first place that permanent organ of international collaboration, the League of Nations, and its episodic product the Disarmament Conference.

The League of Nations cannot be called a World organization in the fullest sense of the term. There are too many gaps in its international scope. Nor would it be possible to regard the League of Nations as an instrument that would settle all the questions in which Poland is concerned. Nevertheless, as regards its European importance, it is an essential factor making for the stabilization of relations, and one of its main objects, the attempt to seek international solutions through collaboration and agreement, is very near to the tendencies of Poland's policy.

I should like to say a few words about the Disarmament Conference. Poland as a nation has a lively humanitarian instinct. Her policy does not set itself tasks that would harm other nations in their normal and peaceful life. The subject of the Conference is, therefore, by its very nature of interest to us. World opinion expects the Conference to facilitate and to consolidate the work of peace. That is also what Poland expects. But I should like above all to describe how our peacefulness should be understood.

It is, as I understand it, a peacefulness that is positive, active, and arises from a deep political conviction and from the essential characteristics of our nation. We want peace, for we have a deep belief in the enduring

value, success, and usefulness of the results achieved by loyal international collaboration.

I mention this in order to avoid confusing our real motives with certain fears or uncertainties, a confusion which has too often been attributed to us in various political opinions and estimates. Any such misunderstanding must be dispelled.

Poland's aim is peace, because she considers it good for herself and for the world, as the indispensable condition to give the arrested progress of humanity a new start. We should like to see a lasting result of the Conference, and therefore we want to seek it through real and concrete ways. We did not put forward any large disarmament scheme at the beginning of the Conference. Such initiative would, it seems to me, exceed our means and possibilities. After a year's work of the Conference we can, and then we should be able to appraise its results and possibilities.

The result of this examination induced me to put forward Polish proposals for a practical termination of the present stage of disarmament work. There can be no doubt that the attainable results must be much less important than the results that are desirable. Hence our proposals appear on the surface very modest. I do not wish to be a prophet, and especially a poor one, but I think that all that had been said during the Conference before we put our proposals forward and all that was brought into special relief afterwards,

clearly opens up for the Conference two alternatives : either a modest programme, based on simple principles, which can easily be defined and therefore easily controlled, or failure which would produce, as a negative effect, an atmosphere of disappointment, loss of confidence, and an increased dislike ; that is a result directly opposed to the intentions and designs of the majority of the States collaborating in Geneva.

With regard to the technique itself of the Conference, one episode in particular has become the subject of many discussions and comments. It is the so-called Conference of Five Powers. The suspicion that it was intended to establish a special international organ above or apart from the League and the Conference has produced lively political repercussions and that is not a matter of indifference to us. Our representative has clearly expressed our views on this matter, and as a result of this we received an explanation and statement from the most competent quarters that such tendency did not lie in the intentions and aims of the participants in the discussions. I consider that explanation as a very useful one, for otherwise we would have to make the firm reservation that any decisions referring to our direct or indirect interests and taken without our participation in them, could not, of course, have any binding force on us.

In the debates of our Sejm, which have frequently been discussed in the Press, there has of late recurred

the constant theme of German revisionist propaganda and its role in international relations and in Polish-German relations. Those who have time and money can make any propaganda they please and they will always find someone who will listen to it. But I do not think that we should attach too great an importance to it. Nobody has ever succeeded in changing the statutes of Europe by mere words. In the last few days, however, I paid some attention to that question, when, in an article of the British Press dealing with matter of that kind, the name of the German Chancellor was mentioned. The official German agency in a communiqué issued the day before yesterday restored to that utterance a form which makes it admissible in international relations. Such pronouncements, regardless of their international significance, must always exert some influence in the direct relations between Poland and Germany. These relations are very simple; our attitude to Germany and her affairs will be exactly the same as Germany's attitude to Poland. In practice, therefore, more in this respect depends on Berlin than on Warsaw.

By our whole conduct we have shown that Poland is ready for loyal and creative international collaboration, but she will never be the plaything of others.

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EXPOSE MADE TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE FEBRUARY 5TH, 1934

IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS—A NON-AGGRESSION
PACT WITH GERMANY—IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH FREE
CITY

IN OUR DIRECT relations we can show some tangible results. Last year I spoke of the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union as strengthening the security of our frontiers. Since then we have consistently continued our efforts. As regards security we have supplemented the pact by a new agreement on the definition of the aggressor. We have, so to speak, stated with the greatest possible accuracy our will not to resort to aggression. It is particularly gratifying that our ally, Roumania, has joined in that agreement and consequently the value and scope of that statute of peace has been considerably extended.

The lack of aggressive tendencies as between ourselves and the U.S.S.R. has produced an atmosphere in which the disappearance of opposed political trends

made itself felt in a number of other spheres. It was also possible to establish an identity of views in quite a number of matters. This, for instance, was revealed several times during the Disarmament Conference, and on the frontier itself a neighbourly friendliness has made itself felt which was reflected in a number of technical matters. Our Government attaches great importance to that evolution of relations and the contact initiated with the Soviet Government, a contact which I hope shortly to be able to keep up personally.

The past year was marked by a radical change in the relations with our western neighbour. When the Government of Chancellor Hitler came into power, it was the prevalent opinion in Europe that this would necessarily lead to increased tension in Polish-German relations. Our Government did not share that view. When last time I spoke in Parliament of the reciprocal nature of Polish-German relations and their interaction, believe me, I did not only have in mind the negative side of that formula. In our first contacts with the Chancellor and his Government, we noted the clear and bold language in the discussion of our relations. That method of dealing which fully conforms to the view of our Government, has at once created the basis for more permanent forms of good neighbourliness. A clearly formulated idea made it possible to draw up quickly the clear text of a diplomatic document which, by its conciseness, without however prejudicing its

juridical correctness, best served to characterize the tendencies of both Governments. A new document of peace came into being, a declaration not to resort to force, which owing to its importance goes beyond ordinary neighbourly relations. In its text we gave expression to the conviction that this was a very essential contribution to securing European peace.

Thus the past year produced new positive achievements with regard to two important problems.

It gives me satisfaction to say that our friendly and old-time relations have stood their test in the light of new events. I refer in particular to our alliances with France and Roumania, dating as they do from the first years of the existence of re-born Poland. This, in my opinion, above all serves as favourable evidence of the spirit which animates these alliances. When a collaboration of countries does not set before itself aggressive aims against anyone, the fate of that collaboration can be viewed with confidence. It can always be usefully turned to account without detriment to the common weal. In my personal contacts with the leaders of the policy of our allies, contacts which I intend to continue amicably, I was able to find unanimity as to that view.

It is also with pleasure that I note a consistent progress in a matter which is not *par excellence* of a diplomatic nature, for it relates to the everyday life of our State. I refer to our relations with the Free City of Danzig. That we have managed to move from a platform of

disputes and litigations to attempts at finding fair and just agreements, based on a practical appraisal of the situation. Such efforts have already produced positive results and no doubt will in future continue to do so. I hope that the ideas and tendencies which found expression particularly in our arrangements of August last year can be developed into a permanent system of collaboration.

Thus in the sphere of our opportunities the past year was certainly not lost for the cause of consolidating peace.

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STATEMENT MADE TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY ON POLAND'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FOUR-POWER PACT,
ON JUNE 8TH, 1933

THE PUBLISHED TEXT of the Four-Power Pact, which was initialled on June 7th in Rome, contains rather vague provisions which differ considerably from the original proposals. However, the history of the negotiations for the pact as well as certain passages in the present text call for a precise statement. First of all, it must be made clear that any decisions taken on the strength of this pact and relating directly or indirectly to the interests of Poland can in no way be binding on the Polish Government. The Polish Government has not accepted any obligations for collaboration with the Four-Power Bloc as an international organ. The views of the Polish Government in that matter had at the time the pact was made, been already clearly formulated.

V

EXPOSE MADE TO THE FOREIGN
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE SEYM,
FEBRUARY 1ST, 1935

BECK'S VISIT TO MOSCOW, RUSSIA'S ENTRY INTO LEAGUE—
ANNIVERSARY OF GERMAN-POLISH AGREEMENT—BARTHOUS'S VISIT
TO WARSAW—POLAND'S ACTION FOR THE GENERALIZATION OF
TREATIES FOR PROTECTION OF MINORITIES—EASTERN LOCARNO—
POLISH INTEREST IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES
OF THE DANUBE BASIN

THE YEAR 1934 was marked by numerous events of great importance in our policy and I should therefore like to make at the outset a survey of those events and of matters initiated in the course of that year. I shall begin with the relations with our neighbours.

When I addressed the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate last year the foundations of good neighbourly relations between Poland and the Soviet Union were then already laid. Like the majority of the western neighbours of the Soviet Union we had by that time in existence the Non-Aggression Pact and the Protocol for the definition of the aggressor signed in London in

APPENDIX

July, 1933. I should like to emphasize once again the significance of both these pacts, as I think in no other existing international agreement, including the Covenant, has such precision been obtained in expressing the determination mutually not to violate the peace and security as between neighbours. Shortly after my exposé last year, when I visited Moscow to return the visit paid by the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, and also as an outward manifestation of the establishment of good relations, I had occasion to make personal contact with the leading personalities of the U.S.S.R. In my talks during that visit I found on the Soviet side, just as on our own, a readiness to give a lasting character to this new and good form of neighbourliness. Its logical sequel was the extension of the existing non-aggression agreement between our two countries for a further period of ten years, that is up to the end of 1945. This act showed that both sides desired a permanent solution of the problem of neighbourliness. Hence it represented something more than mere political tactics. This new step found its outward expression in the raising of the diplomatic representations of both States to the rank of Embassies.

The contact between our Governments was further extended last year when Russia entered the League of Nations and her representative took his seat in the Council. The attitude adopted by us at Geneva in connection with that event was the clear result of the

work that had been already done by way of direct understanding.

At a time when the entry of the Soviets into the League of Nations was the subject of discussions diplomatically and in the Press, a considerable section of European opinion expected us and even tried to persuade us to put forward some conditions or demands. Our Government did not think it advisable to complicate such an important matter by seeking advantages for themselves in Geneva, as this might have obscured the straight and clear line of our policy which consistently aims at the establishment of a normal and healthy atmosphere on our eastern frontier.

A few days ago the Press of Berlin and Warsaw rightly devoted much attention to the anniversary of the signing of the Polish-German agreement of January 26th, 1934. It can be safely said that this important agreement, animated by a sincere will to peace, has in its entirety stood the test of life during that period and has now penetrated many spheres of everyday life on both sides of the frontier. The will to settle mutual relations equitably, as expressed in the Pact, opened up the way to the settlement of many practical questions.

On the part of the authorities this contact was manifested in the visits of prominent political personalities either in a semi-official capacity, such as the visit of Dr. Goebbels, or in a private capacity, such as the recent visit of General Goering, the Prussian Prime Minister.

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The raising of the respective legations in Berlin and Warsaw to the rank of Embassies gave the representatives of both countries a position commensurate with their importance.

In all the negotiations conducted between ourselves and the Government of the Reich on various technical matters during the past year, we had occasion to note much good intention on the part of the German Government. The negotiations were conducted in a spirit that was in keeping with the principles of our agreement of January last. I am convinced that the German Government had noted the same on our part. This is a very real consummation of the agreement.

I began my survey of the political events of the past year with our relations with our neighbours, for by their very nature they penetrate into the daily work of the State. My reasons, however, are not merely of an egoistic character. For it is my deepest conviction that the establishment of good neighbourly relations is the most genuine work in the cause of peace, and nothing can contribute more effectively to the general effort to restore normal international intercourse than the removal of friction between neighbours. In these efforts, however, we never lost sight of their wider significance. In our endeavour to add new positive factors to our political achievements, we wanted to enhance the values contributed to international relations by Poland. The new agreements have never, in any way, infringed our

earlier obligations. This relates in the first instance to our alliances. We had occasion to observe this in the course of our numerous contacts with the Governments of the allied countries. I should like to recall in the first instance the visit to Warsaw of M. Barthou, our staunch friend, whose signature is fixed to the pact of alliance of 1921. The personal contact with the French Foreign Minister, severed by the tragic death of M. Barthou, was resumed at Geneva in the same spirit with his successor, M. Laval.

In my previous statement, I dealt with Poland's action regarding the generalization of the treaties for the protection of national minorities and referred to the moral foundations and practical implication of the problem. The effect of our motion, the trend of the discussions, and the repercussions, are known to you from the reports of the meeting of the Assembly. I do not, therefore, intend to enter again into all the details of the subject. I would only recall that our pertinent motives met with no reasoned argument; on the contrary, the debate came to a deadlock owing to reasons of procedure, which compelled us to define our attitude independently. But I should like also to draw your attention to the bearing of this question on our relationship to the League. It must be frankly admitted that, as things were before, the actions of that institution, as far as they affected Poland, were such as to upset our public opinion and offend both our interests and national

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SOMETHING MORE LIKE AN UMBRELLA

dignity. The clearing up of this matter, however, makes it possible to watch sympathetically the development and growth of the League, to consider in an objective manner the problems dealt with by this greatest instrument of international collaboration and to seek unreservedly co-operation with other countries on its platform. This, I am convinced, will certainly benefit the League itself as well as the policy of the Polish Government, which is based on the sincere feeling of solidarity with other nations, a trait characteristic of our people.

The sequence of events, demonstrated to you, is not merely a collection of incidents. They are all normally symptomatic of our situation in this part of Europe. Owing to Poland's geographical position, our interests are, of course, primarily directed towards such initiative and proposals as are connected with the attempt at political organization of the eastern part of Europe. In this respect there are actually two lines of diplomatic negotiation: one, the older, has been going on since June, last year, and this is the question of the so-called Eastern Locarno. This name is misleading and has caused a good deal of misunderstanding. In fact, it is neither 'Locarno' nor 'Eastern.' The essential part of the Locarno pacts consisted in the guarantee of a definite frontier by Great Britain and Italy. The pact proposed now does not possess this characteristic feature. Besides, its name certainly is not attractive to us. The Locarno

treaties were a bad experience for Poland, for in our memory they are associated with a certain style in the policy of the Western Powers which completely disregarded our vital interests. Nor is it an eastern pact, for the problems of the east are treated there only partially and inadequately. This pact is, as I have said, still in course of negotiation, and all aspects of the problem, even the most trifling, are of special concern to us, since they relate to the sphere of our immediate and most vital interests. That is why we must carefully study all the details, being especially anxious that the results achieved by collaborating with our neighbours, with the object of a real stabilization of conditions in the eastern part of Europe, should come to no harm. We have been ruled by these principles in our considerations in the past and we shall be governed by them also in the future. It can be said to-day that, both from the political and from the formal aspect, this presents far too many doubtful points to foresee the final result of these negotiations. It will suffice to say, by way of example, that there is not yet even a draft of the proposed pact.

The other proposal was put forward as a result of an understanding between France and Italy during the visit of M. Laval to Rome.

This was the one problem discussed which concerned us, and in which our collaboration was sought. It was the question of finding formulas for improved relations between the countries of the Danubian basin and their

direct and indirect neighbours. The Danubian countries are almost our neighbours ; they are, at any rate, in the sphere of our traditional and actual relations. The idea of bringing all these countries, without discrimination, into a pact for friendly collaboration, and the elimination of local friction, was given a sympathetic reception on our part. For this agrees with the traditional attitude of Polish policy in regard to that region. During the conversations in Rome only the first outline of this action was sketched. We shall watch it with interest and sympathy, and study first of all the views of the Danubian countries as being those who are directly concerned.

VI

INTERVIEW GRANTED TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE 'ILUSTROWANY KURJER CODZIENNY' (OF CRACOW) ON APRIL 15TH, 1935

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS—THE TALK OF WAR—CONDITIONS OF
POLITICAL STABILITY—CONDITIONS OF RECOVERY OF NATIONAL
AND INTERNATIONAL LIFE

WITH REGARD to the League of Nations as an institution, the existence of which is associated by many people with the issue of peace and war, I must say that I am astonished at the manner in which these fundamental questions are being discussed. When in March, 1933, I left Warsaw, which at one time was not sufficiently recognized as a factor of peace, and arrived in Geneva, which was looked upon as the kingdom of peace, I was astonished to see that, whilst my colleagues in the Warsaw Government concentrated their efforts exclusively on work for peace, all the pacifists in Geneva spoke of war. The excitement of certain European statesmen was in striking contrast to the calmness of my colleagues in Warsaw. During a conversation at the

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time with an eminent pacifist, I said that I had the impression that he wanted to convert me to the belief in the inevitability of war, for which we have no wish whatever.

It is easy to speak to-day of the crisis in all the international institutions, but it should be stated that what may be called the cardinal issues affecting political stability in international relations consist of (1) the direct relations between States, and (2) the international relations serving to reinsure direct relations. It is impossible to achieve a sufficient measure of general stability without stability of bilateral relations.

A great consistent effort is required if a normal standard of international life is to be maintained in the present difficult conditions. The lightness with which war and other similar abnormalities are discussed gives me the impression that there is some kind of fear of responsibility in the daily Press.

I presume that just as the process of disorganizing international life has taken a fairly long time, it is not to be expected that international life would speedily recover. I expect that the sanest form would be an improvement in all bilateral relations and a gradual organization of geographical and political complexes. As to the wider organizations, it would be a considerable step forward if any further disorganization of them could be arrested.

VII

EXPOSÉ ON POLAND'S FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE POLISH SEYM ON JANUARY 15TH, 1936

ABYSSINIA AND ITALY—BRITAIN'S ROLE IN THAT CONFLICT—NO
IDEOLOGICAL WARS FOR POLAND—REGIONAL PACTS—TREATMENT
OF POLES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

I SHALL ENDEAVOUR to deal in succession with the various problems that are of interest to us and to account for the factors underlying the decisions we have taken.

I propose to begin with the question which stands in the forefront of diplomatic discussions, and also in the Press, throughout the world to-day ; that is the conflict between Italy and Abyssinia. This question, though remote from us, is yet very characteristic when we assess the most essential factors in the present international situation.

As a matter of practical consideration Africa is for us a far-off continent, in which we have no direct interests. With Italy we have maintained direct relations which

are of the best, and are based on old traditions and a present understanding of our mutual interests. Almost on the very eve of the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict we were carrying on a friendly exchange of opinions with a view to bringing about by an amicable collaboration of several countries an improvement in the position of the Danubian region, which is near to us geographically.

In the shaping of this conflict on the Geneva stage the leading part was played by the action of the British Government. I have no right to define Great Britain as one of the parties to the dispute, for as long as the question is handled in accordance with the normal procedure of the League of Nations, such a description would be incorrect. When speaking of Great Britain I wish to say that our relations with that Power are of the best, as shown both in a number of activities at Geneva and in the favourable development of trade between our two countries. And it seems to be quite improbable that there could be any discord between the fundamental aims of British policy in Europe and the vital interests of our own policy.

Our attitude towards the present conflict is therefore absolutely impartial and disinterested. Yet we participated in the work of the League organs, and jointly with the other members of those organs we have taken certain exceptional measures known as sanctions.

This decision calls for an explanation. I think, in

every case that arises on the international horizon, it is most essential for our country to define the actual extent of our interest and commitments. To carry on a policy 'beyond our means,' to have a desire to intervene in matters transcending our interests and possibilities, a kind of political ubiquitousness, that is to my mind inadvisable. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that both the geographical position and the weight of our country in international affairs—which I think has been generally recognized by now—prevent us from descending, for the sake of a momentary satisfaction or opportunism, beneath the standard set for us by the concatenation of the active forces in international affairs.

I was suddenly faced with this problem at the autumn session of the Assembly of the League, where together with others we worked in an atmosphere of great concern because of the looming conflict, a conflict which, as I have already mentioned, went beyond the range of our immediate interests.

This problem aroused the concern of certain countries who have direct interests in Africa. For others the problem was of special significance owing to their negative attitude towards the Fascist system in Italy. But in the case of all, the importance of the conflict lay in its bearing on the future of the existence of the League as an institution.

The first motive, that of African policies, does not

concern us directly. Neither can the second motive actuate our decisions. An extraordinary diversity of the systems of government in the various countries and an almost universal process of changes in this sphere, proceeding, as they do, along different lines which are incompatible with one another—those are the signs of the times.

It is not necessary to look far: each of our six neighbours is governed according to a different system and method, has chosen a different constitution, and, to justify it, invokes different ideals.

Consequently, if we were to regulate international politics and our attitude towards the various countries according to constitutional doctrines, it would ultimately lead the world to something like 'religious wars.' On the contrary, the world being weary of difficulties needs something entirely different: it wants a tolerable *modus vivendi*. In my opinion it is much more reasonable to let the various countries manage their own domestic affairs and to seek solidarity and agreement wherever it is possible, and not to be prompted in international politics by the likes or dislikes of any particular political system.

And so there remains the last factor: the League. I have repeatedly had occasion to define in Parliament our attitude towards this problem. I do not propose to go now into the question whether the Covenant of the League is good or bad, or to make any conjecture whether

it will hold its own or whether it will be necessary to reform it.

I think that, as long as the League Covenant is recognized by a great number of countries, it binds us in equal measure with others—no more, but no less.

In a period when international affairs are in a state of flux our Government will not contribute to any weakening of this instrument of international collaboration. This consideration was decisive for the line of action taken by the Polish delegation at Geneva both in the Council and in other bodies appointed by the League.

When speaking of forecasts and the actual work that was carried on for a number of years, I am, of course, referring to the period when the broad fundamental aspects of our policy were designed and constructed by the late Marshal Piłsudski. It is indeed quite clear that one cannot speak of Polish foreign policy at all without referring to the personality of its great maker.

For some years past, and anticipating the unsettled state in international affairs which we are witnessing to-day, Polish policy has been persistently striving for elements constructive and yet tangible, solutions useful to us and to others, and yet at the same time practical. For this very reason that policy has been simple. This policy was given its best expression when the main problems of our relations with our neighbours were

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settled. The period between the years 1932 and 1934 was one of concrete agreements.

It may be recalled that, in the pact of non-aggression between the U.S.S.R. and its western neighbours, Poland played a decisive part, thereby helping to establish for the first time the principles of lasting peaceful relations between the Soviet Union and countries of a different order.

As regards our agreement with Germany of 1934, world opinion has ranked it as one of the most outstanding international events making for a peaceful coexistence of countries in post-War Europe. When concluding agreements with our neighbours, we have been careful to avoid infringing our previous obligations arising out of the alliances with France and Roumania, and also out of the Covenant.

We joined in international collaboration wherever our activity could be of essential importance. It has been also our care to strengthen the spirit of solidarity and friendship between our country and the countries which are near to us, either owing to old traditions or by reason of their geographical, political, or economic proximity.

In the pronouncements of statesmen and in the discussions of wider political circles, the problem of regional organization has recently been recurring with increasing frequency, and it is therefore worth while to devote some attention to this subject.

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As the universality of the League of Nations has failed, or rather never materialized, it is not surprising that the idea of regional organization has been re-appearing in the political thought of to-day. Perhaps this conception is a right one. But we have to state clearly on our part that it is for us to define what we consider to be the range of Polish interests and that we shall not accept any ready-made formula on the subject. Whoever desires our collaboration must first come to an understanding with us in this respect.

Polish policy, which has been striving for simplification in a world of complicated international events, has frequently diverged from the contemporaneous unsettled trend of international affairs. This has often given, and still gives, rise to a number of campaigns and controversies.

When I visited last summer the capital of one of the countries with which we are on terms of friendship, I could therefore frankly say : " Polish policy is simple —so simple indeed that some especially restless imaginations will in no way believe it." The starting-point of this policy and also its ultimate aim must of course be the interest of Poland, and not any other. It cannot be influenced by any secondary consideration or abstract doctrine. Taking, however, a broad view of the Polish *raison d'État*, we must acknowledge the value of collaboration with others wherever it presents itself to us in a clear and unequivocal form, in a form compatible with

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the interests and dignity of our nation. And we do not intend to shirk this collaboration. But in every single case we must have full knowledge of the motives and aims of the proposed treaty or activity and know whether these motives and aims are not incompatible with the Polish *raison d'État*. We have not signed many political treaties, but those we have signed we mean to keep, and expect each of our co-signatories to do likewise.

Polish public opinion has for some time past been alarmed by the treatment of Poles in our neighbour country, Czechoslovakia. The matter is indeed very painful, and it is easy to understand that our public opinion cannot remain indifferent to the chicanery to which Poles outside Polish territory are subjected ; and the Government will also have to reckon with this factor.

There has been an exchange of diplomatic correspondence on the subject with Prague, under the existing treaties, which empower us to have a say in the matter. In this correspondence, and also during conversations which I had at Geneva several years ago with the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister at the time, I expressed the conviction that the state of feelings between our two countries must be primarily determined by the actual treatment of Poles in Czechoslovakia. All artificial procedure and diplomatic side-stepping are here of no avail. On the other hand, however, any

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proof of goodwill in the matter at issue on the part of the Czechoslovakian Government will be properly appreciated and will in the most direct manner conduce to an improvement of neighbourly feelings. And I would look upon the withdrawal of martial law in Teschen-Silesia as such a sign.

These difficulties which we encounter in some of our neighbourly relations I have left to the latter part of my exposition, for it has been my principal aim to describe our fundamental methods, in accordance with which international events are assessed in my Department.

VIII

SPEECH AT A PUBLIC SESSION OF THE LEAGUE COUNCIL IN CONNECTION WITH THE VIOLATION BY GERMANY OF CERTAIN ARTICLES OF THE VERSAILLES TREATY, MARCH 18TH, 1936

VIOLATION BY GERMANY OF VERSAILLES TREATY THROUGH REOCCU-
PATION OF RHINELAND—LOCARNO AGREEMENTS NEVER FAVOURABLY
VIEWED IN POLAND

ON THIS OCCASION, I should like to make a few general remarks about the Locarno Agreements, which are at the root of the question with which we are now concerned. As is generally known, those agreements have not been sympathetically received in my country. But although, at the time, Polish public opinion objected to them on the ground that, inasmuch as they provided special safeguards for the political stability on the Rhine, they might also give the impression that the security of Eastern Europe was of a more precarious nature, it has nevertheless been found possible, through the joint efforts of the French and Polish Governments, to maintain the Franco-Polish alliance by incorporating it

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in the general system of the 1925 agreements in the form of a treaty of mutual assistance. Thanks to the collaboration of the two Governments, the alliance which existed before the Locarno Agreements remained and still remains in force.

IX

EXPOSÉ MADE IN THE FOREIGN
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE
ON DECEMBER 18TH, 1936

REFERENCE TO LONDON VISIT—RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN VIEWS
OF POLAND AND GREAT BRITAIN—THE QUESTION OF SO-CALLED
LOCARNO RAISED IN LONDON TALKS—JEWISH QUESTION AND JEWISH
EMIGRATION—RELATIONS WITH DANZIG—FREE CITY RECOGNIZES
POLISH RIGHTS THERE—POLAND NOT TO SHRINK FROM PART
ASSIGNED TO HER

I WOULD REMIND all who are uneasy about the future that there have been periods of peace and co-operation without the League of Nations, and wars when the League of Nations was already in existence. In quoting this example I have no intention whatsoever of implying that our interest in this institution has been diminished, nor have I under-estimated the difficulties of our times. I simply desire while discussing definite facts and events of interest to us to remind you of the principle so dear to our policy : ' Il n'y a que la réalité des choses qui compte.'

To those realities belong evidently in the first instance

all the affairs materially affecting our State, that is to say, relations with our neighbours.

The work done by us in co-operation with our eastern neighbour, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, continues to yield useful results. We transact our common neighbourly business without any shocks or serious misunderstandings.

Public opinion has recently been rather shocked by the utterances of one of the speakers during the VIIIth Soviet Congress, whose words appeared to contain menaces to the western neighbours of the Union. Though these utterances did not concern Poland but rather our Baltic friends, I could understand the stir caused in public opinion. This for two reasons: first, because the non-aggression pact which has existed between the Soviet Union and its western neighbours since 1932 is based on the same principles with regard to ourselves as it is with regard to those countries; secondly, because nothing that happens on the shores of the only sea to which we have access can be a matter of indifference to us. It gives me great satisfaction to confirm that the explanation received does not give ground for any concern. I had the opportunity of hearing that the Soviet Government, just like ourselves, continues to attach equal importance to good and normal relations with all the States situated on its western borders.

A certain nervousness, so common in these difficult

times, is apparent in some utterances in the Press and in public opinion in the sphere of our relations with our western neighbour, and this applies to both sides of the frontier. This does not, however, affect my deep conviction that the great and bold decision—to put our relations with the German Reich on a friendly basis—continues to retain its value, both with regard to the direct interests of our country and to relations on the Continent of Europe as a whole.

Nerves remain nerves and decisions remain decisions.

There are certainly many factors in the world working to deprive us of the fruits of our peaceful and constructive labours, but I am convinced that the largest section of our public opinion values those achievements of ours so much that it will reject any attempts from outside at reducing their value.

Among the results of the last year we find many encouraging facts proving that, in taking our decisions with regard to those few political agreements which we have concluded, we followed the path of permanent and stable principles, and did not seek to derive any benefit from transient opportunities. For that very reason our oldest alliances, concluded in the defence of our interests but at the same time featuring a deep loyalty towards the interests of others, have during the last few months proved to be beneficial factors in the European balance of power.

In the light of current problems of special interest

to us I attach great importance to the conversations I had in London. An official communiqué issued on this occasion, and articles in the British Press, informed you about the more important matters under discussion. I should like to add that the importance I attach to this matter is all the greater as the approximation of views between Great Britain and ourselves in regard to many important factors in the present situation has taken place systematically and constantly according as a number of new international problems have arisen. I have no doubt that the raising of the so-called Locarno problems during the London talks meets with your full appreciation. This takes us to the sphere of joint work in which a number of countries are interested.

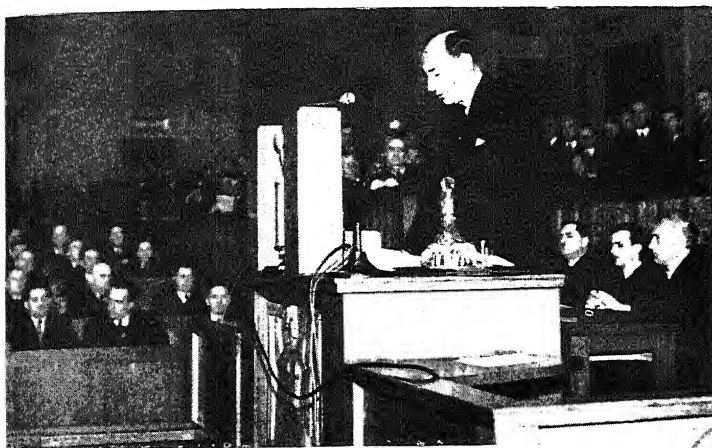
Already during the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations in March last I had the opportunity of defining clearly our attitude to this problem. I had to recall that the pacts of 1925 rather upset the balance of the European Continent, from our point of view.

I mentioned this not in order to criticize or express regrets, but because, in the interests of a general European stabilization and in order to afford us an opportunity of collaborating according to our means with the Western Powers for the achievement of this common goal, I wanted to make clear all the conditions which are necessary if the future Pact is to retain its positive value, avoiding at the same time certain shortcomings or negative features as proved by the experience of 1925.

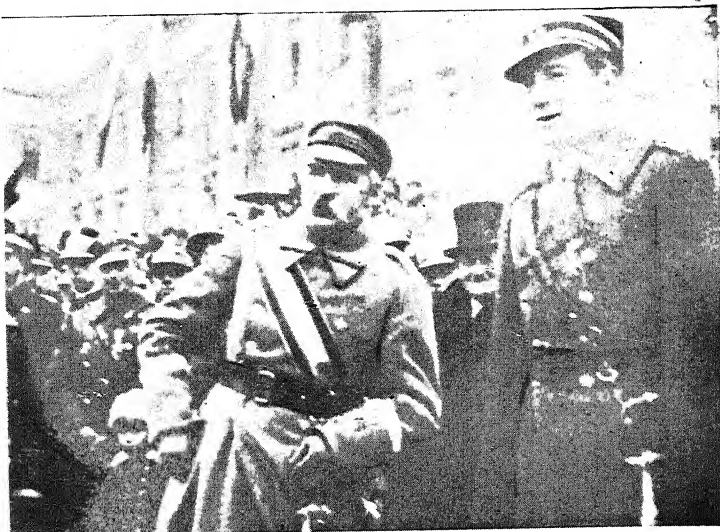
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COLONEL BECK ADDRESSING THE POLISH PARLIAMENT
ON MAY 5TH, 1939



MARSHAL PILSUDSKI IN 1926—WITH COLONEL BECK
AS CHEF DE CABINET



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On these lines we shall frame our attitude to future negotiations, wishing that these negotiations may have the greatest success which is due to all constructive work.

Not the least complication in this Pact will be no doubt its relation to the League of Nations. The previous shaping of this relationship provoked on our part fairly far-reaching objections. In general, if one is to speak frankly about the prevailing anxieties as to the future of the Geneva institution, it seems to me that now more than ever we should give it an opportunity for a possibly quiet passage through this period of grave anxieties, and not burden it with so many complicated tasks.

I cannot maintain silence on the fact that during the current year I put forward in the Assembly of the League of Nations, in the name of Poland, the problem of our colonial interests. This problem may be divided into two parts. First, the securing for our population of territories for emigration. The demographic aspect of this problem is familiar to you. The question of Jewish emigration constitutes a subdivision of this part of the problem. The latter question has a special significance in view of the widespread tendency amongst the numerous Jewish populations to create a national home in Palestine. The Jewish question presents special difficulties in the whole of Eastern Europe in view of certain otherwise quite normal economic and social processes connected

with it. A great number of Jews who are maintaining their families as small middlemen lose their means of existence in particular countries as soon as the economic life develops, and have no opportunity of assuring to their offspring means of livelihood. Jewish emigration is therefore not only a Palestinian problem; it is equally a European problem on the one hand, and a very important problem of emigration to all territories on the other.

The second part of the colonial question for Poland is access to raw materials in a better way than by ordinary commercial exchange.

I deemed it necessary to raise this question now at Geneva, for I met there with an international movement towards studying means for eliminating the present economic and social difficulties in Europe. There were many discussions about preventive measures against the growing economic difficulties. In the circumstances I thought that silence should not be maintained over problems so vital to us.

I cannot close the chapter concerning the League without discussing at some length the Danzig question. Danzig affairs are for us much more than a mere addition to the League's troubles as they embrace a whole series of interests, both every-day and vital. In order to explain, however, the situation of to-day and to present it in a proper light, I have to consider the problem from the League of Nations point of view. First, because

I think that in the appraisal of recent events, Polish public opinion has shown a certain confusion of ideas. Poland possesses in Danzig rights and interests which are known to you and which extend far beyond diplomatic problems.

As to assuring respect for those vital interests of ours, there is no possibility of change in this matter, and the attitude of our Government is simple and immutable. I am bound, however, to say that in all public declarations the Senate of the Free City of Danzig acknowledge, in a clear and categorical manner, the existence of our rights. Similarly, we have no intention of interfering in any way with the rights of the Free City. While defending with firmness our own rights, we have to know how to respect the rights of others.

In the present state of affairs we are conducting intensive negotiations in two directions: first, to secure an efficient and practical execution of our rights and to safeguard our interests in the Free City in view of the many new regulations issued by the Danzig Senate, and secondly, to eliminate difficulties which have arisen between the League Representative and the Senate.

For a week these negotiations have been proceeding favourably, and I hope that in this case also we shall be able to fulfil our task.

Once more I should like to revert to some remarks I made in the first part of my statement; that is to confirm that the enlargement of the scope of our activities, which has characterized the latest period of our policy,

was merely the outcome of necessities imposed on us by the general situation.

I should never like to divert our foreign policy into too many channels, especially with regard to tasks surpassing our actual means.

We should be perhaps a happier country if our part in European politics were less important. But that does not depend on us. There are certain clear issues resulting from our position and the general evolution of international relations. An artificial extension of our political activity would be certainly contrary to the clear traditions of our policy. To shrink from the part assigned to us would be a flight from the responsibilities of our heritage.

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ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
LEAGUE OF NATIONS, AS AN ACT OF
HOMAGE TO THE MEMORY OF KING
GEORGE V, JANUARY 21ST, 1936

OUR GOVERNMENT AND country most respectfully associate themselves with the deep sorrow which has afflicted the British Empire. During his glorious reign, which was marked by great historical events, His Majesty King George the Fifth showed that he possessed in an eminent degree the qualifications of a monarch, and in moments of greatest stress he revealed courage and a firmness of character which were an inexhaustible source of inspiration to his subjects.

His memory is indissolubly linked with the greatest crisis of modern history ; and the post-War period thereafter assigned to him a part in the stabilization of the political life of the British Empire, a stabilization which was the essential condition of the development and equilibrium of the whole world.

The Polish people, who have only recently suffered such a wrench in their own deepest feelings, join most sympathetically in the profound mourning of the British people.

XI

SPEECH AT THE PLENARY SESSION
OF THE SEYM ON JANUARY 5TH, 1937

THE POLISH-FRENCH ALLIANCE

SOME WEEKS AGO I had the opportunity of reporting to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate on the satisfactory trend of our relations with France during the past year. To-day I have in mind the external manifestations which accompanied the ratification in Paris of the Agreement before you, the debates in the French Chamber, the attitude of the French Government, and finally the unanimous vote of ratification given by Parliament. As was pointed out during the debates in the French Chamber, this was the first unanimous vote recorded during the present session.

We have to deal, therefore, with an event of importance and not of everyday occurrence. For that reason I think it is necessary to give a somewhat more complete explanation of the case, as this is an essential condition for the proper understanding of the value and importance of those events. Consequently we must revert to

the beginnings of our relations with France. In February, 1921, the head of our State, accompanied by the Ministers M. Sapieha and General Sosnkowski, arrived in Paris, where, in the persons of President Millerand and of the Ministers Briand and Barthou, he found statesmen fully conscious of the importance of conferring on our old friendship the lasting seal of a treaty of alliance.

The situation and atmosphere of 1921 are worth remembering. Even though many conferences and committees were held at that time, it was essentially a period of temporary chaos, following on the collapse of the war machinery of the world and preceding the first definite attempts at organizing peace. In such conditions, only those questions which were clear and simple had any chance of being settled in a short time, and among these I would count the Franco-Polish relations, as they were then shaped.

Since then Europe has passed through many disillusionments and disappointments. In the course of these sixteen years there was at least a ten-year period when it seemed that all the affairs of this part of the world were governed not only by a permanent code, but also by a permanent procedure. At this stage politics might well have appeared as swathed in red tape. There were some attempts made to invest our simple Agreement—a bilateral agreement between two nations feeling a long-standing sympathy for each other—with some

new complicated and artificial forms. A period of heavy trials followed. The forms of political life in Europe were shaken, even more profoundly than the substance. Rules of procedure failed and very little was left of the old 'Code.'

We have found ourselves in a transitory period between two epochs: between the failure of the first attempt to organize peace and a new attempt which will obviously have to be undertaken. It was at this very moment that we affirmed the vitality of relations between Warsaw and Paris, which culminated in the exchange of visits between General Gamelin and Marshal Smigly-Rydz. The unanimity of French public opinion, and the undoubted unanimity of views on this point in Poland, remind the world to-day of the existence of our alliance.

How far-sighted were the authors of the 1921 Agreement!

You might well ask me: "And what about the future?" I am in a position to declare that, as between the Polish and French Governments, there is a complete agreement on the principle that the Polish-French Alliance should be maintained in view of any future agreements or negotiations. I had the opportunity of making this point clear in my discussions with my French colleague, M. Delbos. In particular, I have in mind the negotiations which are now being conducted for a pact between the Western Powers of Europe to replace the old Locarno Pacts.

Since we are agreed on the principle, let me express the hope that means will be found to safeguard, in view of possible new agreements, the full value of our alliance, both as an element of the security of each of our two countries and as a factor in the general stabilization of Europe.

XII

ADDRESS TO THE OFFICIALS OF THE
POLISH DIPLOMATIC SERVICE ON
THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF TAKING
OFFICE WHEN THE DEED OF
FOUNDATION OF A 'COLONEL BECK'
SCHOLARSHIP WAS HANDED OVER
TO HIM, NOVEMBER 30TH, 1937

TIME DIFFERS ACCORDING TO THE WAY IN WHICH WE WORK—
TWO GREAT MEMORIES CONNECTED WITH MARSHAL PIŁSUDSKI—
COLONEL BECK'S CONFIDENCE IN HIS STAFF—HIS APPRECIATION
OF THEIR FOUNDATIONS OF A SCHOLARSHIP

IN POLAND TO-DAY we still go by piece-work and not by week-work, and calendar dates are therefore of no special importance in our task. Nevertheless, the calendar and the clock, both human inventions, play their part in our lives. What, then, is the part played by the calendar and the clock, those seemingly exact measures? I say seemingly, for everybody knows that there are short years and long hours; the striking of the clock differs according to the way in which we work and according to the duties and tasks which we have to

perform. The clock of a political head turns more swiftly than the clock of people who are able to choose work in some Government Department as their permanent profession. But for all that, these human inventions are a profound and undeniable advantage, inasmuch as they make it somehow easier for us to get away from the dangerous flux of everyday life, that intangible flux in which the boundary lines between what is lofty and what is petty may become so easily blurred.

Hours and definite dates make it possible for us to take stock at times, to turn round and also to look ahead. My diary in the service of the Polish Foreign Office is marked especially by that single date, so exact in its cruel implications, because then we suffered the greatest loss that could have occurred to us, after our greatest moment of happiness since we have emerged as a nation. I would therefore like to recall now two memories which are connected with Marshal Piłsudski and with the date of my arrival at this Department five years ago. I distinctly remember two sentences or rather two ideas which he then brought clearly before my mind.

First, the Marshal said to me : " Remember that times are coming when the conventional structure of international life, which has endured almost throughout the past ten years, will be shaken. Forms which the world has become accustomed to regard as permanent are

crumbling to pieces. We shall have to examine ideas afresh, to classify the States anew and in some sense to define their right to have a voice in matters of wider or more particular importance. This development will be accompanied by a series of prolonged complications, and we in Poland will have to face, as time goes on, the problem of standing up for Poland's views, perhaps against everybody; but in any case we shall have to improve upon the period of our post-War history, which has naturally left behind it trails of weakness, shortcomings and inaccuracy."

These words were spoken on November 2nd, 1932. The other memory is this: During the same conversation, when I was about to leave, our Commandant added: "But remember above all that you must not entertain ideas and plans that exceed the capacity of the instrument which has to carry them out, for everything is done by human beings."

As you see, one and the same conversation contained the demand to march onward and to fight and at the same time uttered a warning.

What made my life and my work with you much easier was that I had previously had occasion to come into contact with those who work in this Department and that I was conscious of your great store of enthusiasm for your work and your belief in the necessity for it. And to-day, after the experiences of those five years, I deem it my duty to say that when, in this first period of

my work as Minister, I refrained from diluting the great political ideas of Marshal Piłsudski, I never lacked confidence that I should discover on your part the strongest possible inclination for the realization of our fixed objectives. In the hour of trial, when he is no longer with us, I continue to rely on these moral values. And believe me, Gentlemen, when in times of brave decisions, in periods of venturesome pacts, I could read in the eyes of some of you anxiety, I felt that you had doubts, and I was sure that you exchanged ideas among yourselves because you were truly concerned, testing, and exploring to see whether that were indeed the right path. I understood this perfectly, as it was quite human. But I would say this, that when I saw these signs, not for one moment did I lose the belief that these appearances were due to your concern that the result should be good, and not to any lack of faith or unwillingness to lend a hand in a bold and difficult task.

There is one more thing I would like to say. During the various periods of extremely strenuous work, I have never heard anyone in the service of this Ministry plead fatigue as a reason why he should be exempted from the common effort, even on the busiest day. I have to mention this, as it is a point of honour in our service.

As I already remarked, the calendar and the clock, though they are only human inventions, must be taken into consideration. I am therefore all the more appreciative of your idea to found a scholarship at the University

which bears the name of our Great Leader.¹ The clocks will strike, first mine and then yours. And one day, perhaps, some young student of the University, whose work will be easier, thanks to the efforts of you all, Gentlemen, will look through the faded pages of old documents, will thereby recall to mind the glory of the Old Republic, and will then realize how great a concentration of effort is needed if this our New Republic is to be victorious and successful.

¹ Warsaw University bears the name of Joseph Piłsudski.

XIII

EXPOSÉ TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE SEYM, ON JANUARY 10TH, 1938

OUR PREDILECTION FOR BILATERALISM—OUR RELATIONS WITH GERMANY, FRANCE, AND ROUMANIA—CONSOLIDATION OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH GERMANY—NO CHANGE IN RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS—INTERNATIONAL SITUATION MORE TENSE, BUT POLAND HAS SUFFERED LEAST—REMARKS ON FUTURE OF LEAGUE—FUTURE OF PALESTINE

THE PERIOD WITH which I propose to deal to-day belongs to those years which I defined in my previous statements in Parliament as a period of fundamental changes in the methods of international policy.

I would recall briefly that I characterized these changes as a disturbance of the methods proposed for the settlement of relations between States in the post-War atmosphere. It was thought at that time that the sudden shock would produce a radical and definite change in the methods of human thinking and acting.

As far as we are concerned, we have always affirmed our sympathy with the idea of seeking new ways to

spare mankind the sacrifices and losses suffered where they might have been prevented if better forms of agreement had been employed. But apart from the deeper changes in the structure of international life, the very forms in which from the outset this new idea had been clothed, carried the germ of many failures and must have frequently been open to objections.

During the period of which I propose to speak, this process of transformation and these failures had sometimes assumed a far-reaching character, and yet it would be difficult to maintain that the end of it is now in sight. To-day I venture to give you again a detailed analysis of these general phenomena. As none of you will have any objections, if I primarily measure all problems, wide or narrow, from the point of view of the immediate interests of our country, I shall begin by surveying our own affairs.

These affairs do not present such a gloomy picture. In previous years I have frequently had occasion to point out to you that it had always been the tendency of our Government to examine in a strictly realistic fashion each problem of interest to our country quite independently of the changing opportunities and currents in world opinion. For this reason we have at times been charged with an excessive predilection for 'bilateralism,' for too scrupulous a limitation of our conversations only to those partners who were able to make direct decisions regarding the problems under discussion.

To-day I think we can dot the i's and say that we have endeavoured to work in such a manner that none of the vital political interests of Poland should be injured or drawn into the confusion observable in the methods of wider international co-operation.

Our relations with our neighbours, in which our two pacts of non-aggression, one with the Soviet Union and the other with the German Reich, are of foremost importance, do not depend on any international institution or procedure. Indeed, these treaties were concluded when both these Powers were outside the League of Nations ; they are based on well-considered reasons and political interests and have retained their unimpaired value.

Our two treaties of alliance, with France and Roumania, though they are in no way incompatible with the League of Nations and even contain references to the Geneva institution in their text, date back to the years 1921 and 1922, that is to a time when the organization of the League of Nations was insufficiently defined and when these alliances were considered for their own worth and not as supplements to the League Covenant.

The greatest measure of confusion was introduced into these problems by the Locarno agreements. However, their obsolete form is now a thing of the past.

As to matters of direct concern to Poland, I would recall the important results that have been achieved owing to the fact that we do not refuse to seek new

forms. Consequently in endeavouring, in agreement with the Government of the German Reich, to consolidate our relations based on the principle of good neighbourliness, we decided to settle one of the most essential problems in that sphere, that is the treatment of national minorities on both sides of the frontier. But we did not have at our disposal any old machinery that had stood the test of life. As, however, we clearly realized our objective, we found in the declaration of November 5th, 1937, a new pattern which, I am convinced, on the one hand is a reasonable guarantee of the internal cohesion of either State, and on the other hand is calculated to create favourable conditions in which a large group of citizens, who are attached to their own culture, can live side by side with the national majority in either State. I think that this act, together with the liquidation in July last of the last vestiges of outside interference in some parts of Polish and German territories, is a most important step towards consolidating and strengthening the principles of the agreement of January, 1934.

As regards our neighbour in the east, the Soviet Union, the past year has brought no essential changes. Our attitude and our policy continue to be based on the non-aggression pact of 1932, with all its supplements, and the current problems have therefore been settled in an atmosphere of realistic negotiation.

Turning further east, it must be mentioned that the legations in Tokyo and Warsaw have been raised to the

rank of Embassies, which testifies to the spirit of goodwill and respect by which Polish-Japanese relations are characterized.

A chronological survey of the whole series of visits paid to Warsaw and the Polish visits contemplated for the future is sufficient to show our sustained interest in the Baltic and the importance which we attach to maintaining close relations, based on wide co-operation, with the States bordering on that sea. A sentiment of increasing solidarity links us to those States, with whom we come into contact by land or by sea, with the one exception which is familiar to you.

Similarly in the Danube basin we are anxious to maintain our traditional friendships and I hope that our relations will continue to develop in that region. In this connection it must be recalled that of the various political plans and conceptions that have been mooted, the idea of settling relations in accordance with the principles proposed by the French and Italian Governments during the visit of the French Foreign Minister to Rome in January, 1935, finds greatest favour in Poland.

To sum up the present situation I would say that (1) the crisis as regards the forms of international life has been aggravated, and (2) it can be safely said that Polish policy has suffered comparatively least from that cause.

I return to this crisis, which is primarily connected with the League of Nations, its difficulties, and failures, for certain undoubted successes achieved by means of

international agreements made outside the League cannot be regarded as favourable evidence of its present position.

For a long time I have been unable to avoid the impression that there are two diametrically opposed tendencies in Geneva. Experience has shown beyond all question that the integral application of the principles of the Covenant by far exceeds the real possibilities of the instrument which was called upon to put the Covenant into effect. Moreover, as if by a paradox, there may be noticed not only a growth of certain doctrinaire and political currents of ideas tending to set the League of Nations increasingly harder tasks, but also a formal tendency to correct through theoretical formulæ, applicable only on paper, those short-comings which had been shown up by the actual functioning of the League. Polish diplomacy, desirous of maintaining a correct attitude in the actions of our country, and being, moreover, concerned about the fate of the Geneva institution, has for over two years endeavoured to point to that dangerous contradiction and to find a proper course for the definite problems raised at Geneva, a course which has been determined both by respect for accepted engagements and by a sense of reality and by foresight.

Of course, I do not mean to say that the search for better and juster solutions in international conflicts is an unreal task. What then is unreal?

First of all, it is the possibility of maintaining a state of affairs in which the statute and regulations of an

institution, designed to embrace all the countries in the world, would be applied in the long run only by a certain number of these States in regard to themselves and to others. Hence the fact that the League of Nations from the very outset did not embrace all the States, and in particular the most powerful ones, was a source of danger. This became clear to us when the League of Nations lost its character as a European organization, and more especially when certain acts and declarations almost completely reduced any hope of the return of a number of States of first-rate importance which had left Geneva.

We are not alone in maintaining that it is impossible for one group of States only to bear the obligations imposed by the Covenant on the members of the League, while the other States are relieved of these burdens. I refer in particular to the obligations which an individual State might be expected to fulfil automatically only on account of its membership of the League, that is the obligation of making sacrifices and of acting against other States. Public opinion in the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and in other countries clearly insists on this point.

Nor are we alone in maintaining that the Geneva meetings must not without prejudice to the whole of world policy degenerate into doctrinal confederacies and still less into a *bloc* that would direct its action against other *blocs*. This point of view was emphasized quite

recently by Mr. Eden in a statement in the House of Commons.

But views on this problem and conclusions on this state of affairs are formed rather slowly, so that I have been compelled to have recourse to the Press in order to explain Poland's attitude to our own and to foreign public opinion. On several occasions I took the opportunity of laying before Parliament the views of the Government on the idea of the League of Nations and the importance attached to its existence. But I have also had occasion to state that it would be impossible for Poland to join doctrinal *blocs* or to make our State an instrument of a policy whose aims and means had not been clearly defined by ourselves.

It is not our intention to aggravate the present crisis of the League of Nations, but we must always know what our responsibilities and commitments are, in what way and on what principles international institutions take their decisions. I am raising this problem in public mainly because, in certain quarters of international opinion, the changes brought about by the withdrawal of Italy and the German declaration regarding the League have been underrated, and also because of the views spread in some quarters that the League would derive benefit from the present events. It is difficult to avoid the impression that some quarters would like to see the League becoming above all an instrument directed against the so-called totalitarian States. Oddly enough, the very

same people would make international life 'totalitarian' by using the League for that purpose. This glaring contradiction needs no further comment. But I would repeat once again that we respect the right of everybody to handle his affairs according to his own views, provided, however, that he refrains from attempting to model others, and in particular us, on his own lines.

There is another danger in Geneva. It is a matter of procedure rather than of written principles. As I have already pointed out, the difficulties encountered by the League naturally caused certain States which were interested in these problems, or at any rate could influence their settlement, to meet in conference, according as new problems arose. We have taken part in some of these moves, in particular in the Committee for Non-intervention in Spain, being profoundly convinced that at the moment this was the only practical means of avoiding wider complications from these events in Spain. But we are definitely opposed and shall continue to be so in future, to any practice of causing the League, and thus all its members, to adopt decisions taken only by a group of States, or States outside the League of Nations. I am afraid that in the opinion of many countries which have developed some attachment to this common international work, this latter factor has often produced a discouraging effect on their attitude towards the Geneva institution.

I have endeavoured to give you an analysis of certain

organic defects of the League of Nations and of the influence of the events of the last few years on its working.

Although this statement on political problems which are of immediate concern to us shows that, in the present troubles, we have fared comparatively well, yet it does not follow that we have been spared complications in certain spheres. I am referring to the fate of certain Polish ideas and the initiative which we would like to realize by way of co-operation with other States at Geneva. As you are aware, we have put forward there the questions of emigration and access to raw materials. The discussions on these questions, which are of lively and immediate interest to us, have given a number of other States the opportunity to get to know and to understand our demands. Apart from general subjects, the League of Nations has in its hands the decision of a concrete problem—the future of Palestine. This issue is essential for the solution of the general question of Jewish emigration, and this question in its turn represents a very important chapter in the whole emigration problem of Poland. For a number of reasons varying according to countries and conditions of life, this problem has assumed European magnitude. All these problems are and will remain essential to us, even quite apart from the fate of the League of Nations, for they are practical questions which call for increasingly greater attention. Plans and ideas for a reconstruction of international economic and financial relations are being put forward

with increasing frequency. There are, however, no serious prospects for the success of these plans as long as the outstanding problems of raw materials and emigration are disregarded.

Obviously, if the League of Nations proves to be powerless in this respect, we shall not abandon our efforts to find either by agreement with the various Powers or by some other collective action, effective means of solving those problems, which not only concern our vital interests, but also are part of the general work of restoring tolerable and normal conditions of life in the world. The first results of the studies of these problems is by no means discouraging.

The anxieties of which I have spoken are largely due to the fact that the League of Nations had in its heyday assumed various rights and obligations in all parts of the world. The means used to accomplish these task were not always judiciously chosen. We have had occasion to notice this in the sphere of our direct interests, for instance, in the Free City of Danzig.

Geneva will continue to be much troubled with the problems in various parts of the world, and really I do not know how the League will emerge from the obligations it has assumed.

It would be probably risky to make to-day any prophecies as to the fate of the Geneva institution. It seems doubtful if the next meeting of the League Council in January can arrive at any conclusive decisions in this

respect. But I have the impression that any undesirable weakening of the League cannot fail to increase a feeling of individual responsibility on the part of the various Governments, the great majority of whom undoubtedly desire conditions for a peaceful existence of their own people and consequently also of the people of other countries. It is, therefore, with the keenest interest that we follow the attempts to bring about discussions between the various capitals, as we are convinced that with the experiences of the past years and a sound appreciation of the situation by the European States, we shall never be faced with proposals for international collaboration which would be contrary to the unalterable principles of our policy and to our vital interests.

XIV

DECLARATION OF COLONEL BECK TO THE POLISH SEYM ON MAY 5TH, 1939

RELATIONS BETWEEN POWERS TAKING ON MORE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER—WITH SOME BETTER RELATIONS, WITH OTHERS SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES—THE BRITISH ALLIANCE—THE DENUNCIATION BY GERMANY OF THE POLISH-GERMAN PACT—THE FUTURE OF DANZIG—THE POLISH PROVINCE OF POMORZE—CONDITIONS WHICH MUST GOVERN ANY AGREEMENT WITH GERMANY FOR THE FUTURE

THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION provides me with an opportunity of filling in some gaps in my work of recent months. The course of international events would perhaps justify more statements of a foreign minister than was afforded by my only exposé in the Senate Commission for Foreign Affairs.

On the other hand it was exactly the same swift development of events that prompted me to postpone a public declaration until a time when the principal problems of our foreign policy should have taken on a more definite form.

The consequences of the weakening of the collective international institutions and of a complete revision of

the method of intercourse between nations, which I reported on several occasions in the Houses, caused the opening of many new problems in different parts of the world. That process and its results have reached in recent months the borders of Poland.

A very general outline of these phenomena can be summed up by saying that the relations between particular Powers have taken on a more individual character, with their own special features. The general movements have been weakened. One nation simply speaks more and more directly to another.

As far as we are concerned, very serious events have taken place. Our contact with some Powers became easier and firmer, while in other cases serious difficulties have arisen. Looking at things chronologically, I am referring in the first place to our agreement with the United Kingdom, with Great Britain. After repeated diplomatic contacts, designed to define the scope and aims of our future relations, we reached on the occasion of my visit to London a direct agreement, based on the principle of mutual assistance in the case of a direct or indirect menace to the independence of one of our countries. The formula of the agreement is known to you from the declaration of Mr. Neville Chamberlain of April 6th, the text of which was drafted by common agreement and should be regarded as a pact concluded between the two governments. I regard it as my duty to add that the form and character of the comprehensive

conversations held in London give a particular value to the agreement. I should like Polish public opinion to know that I found, on the part of the British statesmen, not only a profound knowledge of the general political problems of Europe, but also an attitude towards our country such as permitted me to discuss all vital problems with frankness and confidence and without any reservations or doubts.

It was possible to establish rapidly the principles of Polish-British collaboration first of all because we made it clear to each other that the intentions of both our Governments were in agreement on basic European problems; certainly neither Great Britain nor Poland has any aggressive intentions whatever, but they are in an equal degree determined in the defence of certain basic principles of conduct in international life.

The parallel declarations of the leaders of French policy are an additional proof that there is agreement as between Paris and Warsaw that the effectiveness of our defensive pact not only cannot be affected adversely by the change of the international situation, but on the contrary, that our agreement should constitute one of the most essential elements in the political structure of Europe. Our Polish-British agreement, however, has been used by the Chancellor of the German Reich as a pretence for a one-sided denunciation of the treaty which the Chancellor of the Reich concluded with us in 1934.

Before proceeding, then, any further in the exposition of this matter, allow me to indulge in a brief historical outline.

The fact that I have had the honour to participate actively in the conclusion and execution of the Polish-German Pact, imposes on me the duty of its analysis. The pact of 1934 was a great event in 1934. It was an attempt to give some better course to the history of two great nations, an attempt at leaving the unwholesome atmosphere of daily clashes and wider hostile designs, at rising above the animosities of centuries, and at building deep the foundations of mutual respect. An endeavour to oppose evil is always the best expression of political activity.

From this point of view the breaking of such a pact is no insignificant matter. However, every treaty is worth as much as the consequences which follow from it. And if the policy and conduct of the partner diverges from the principles of the pact, we have no reason for mourning its weakening or its dissolution. The Polish-German Pact of 1934 was a treaty of mutual respect and good neighbourliness, and, as such, it possessed a positive value for the life of our country, the life of Germany, and the life of the whole of Europe. Since, however, there have appeared tendencies to interpret it as a limit to the freedom of our policy, or as a ground for demanding from us one-sided concessions contrary to our vital interests, it thereby lost its real character.

Let us now pass to the present situation. The German Reich has taken the very fact of the Polish-British understanding as a motive for denouncing the pact of 1934. Various legal objections were raised on the German side. I will take the liberty of referring lawyers to the text of our reply to the German memorandum, which will be handed to-day to the German Government. I should not like to detain you any longer on the diplomatic aspects of the event, but one of these aspects has a special significance. The Reich Government, as is apparent from the text of the German memorandum, arrived at its decision on the ground of Press reports, without ascertaining the views of either the British or the Polish Governments as to the character of the agreement concluded. It was not difficult to do so, for I expressed myself immediately on my return from London as ready to receive the ambassador of the Reich, who did not until to-day avail himself of such an opportunity.

Why is this circumstance important? Even the most elementary examination makes it clear that neither the character nor the purpose and scope of the agreement was as important as the mere fact that such an agreement was concluded at all. And this in turn is important for an appreciation of the intentions of the Reich's policy, for if, contrary to their previous statement, the Government of the Reich interpreted the 1934 declaration of non-aggression between Poland and Germany as meant

to isolate Poland and to make normal, friendly relations between our country and the Western Powers impossible, we would on our own part have always rejected such and interpretation.

To make a proper estimate of the situation, we should first of all ask the question what is the real aim of it all? Without that question and our reply to it, we cannot properly appreciate the real import of the German statements with regard to matters concerning Poland. I have already referred to our attitude towards the West. There remains the problem of the German proposals as to the future of the Free City of Danzig, the communication of the Reich with East Prussia through our province of Pomorze and the additional subjects mentioned as matters of common interest to Poland and Germany.

Let us therefore investigate in turn these problems.

As to Danzig, some general preliminary remarks. The Free City of Danzig was not invented by the Versailles Treaty. It has existed for many centuries as a result of a positive cross between Polish and German interests. The German merchants of Danzig assured the development and prosperity of that town, thanks to the Polish overseas trade. Not only the development, but the very reason of existence of that city were formerly due to the decisive fact that it was situated at the mouth of our only great river, and to-day to its position on the main water-way and railway line con-

necting us with the Baltic. This is the truth which no formulas can change. The population of Danzig is to-day predominantly German, but its livelihood and prosperity depend on the economic potentialities of Poland.

What conclusions have we drawn from that fact? We have stood and we stand firmly on the ground of the rights and interests of our overseas trade and our maritime policy in Danzig. Seeking reasonable and conciliatory solutions, we have purposely not endeavoured to exert any influence on the free national, ideological, and cultural development of the German majority in the Free City.

I shall not lengthen my address by quoting concrete examples. They are sufficiently well known to all those who have been concerned in any way with the matter. But when, after repeated statements of German statesmen, who respected our views and expressed the opinion that 'this provincial town will not be the object of a conflict between Poland and Germany,'—I hear a demand for the annexation of Danzig to the Reich, when I get no reply to our proposal of March 26th of a common guarantee of the existence and rights of the Free City, and I learn subsequently that it has been simply regarded as a refusal of negotiations—I have to ask myself what is the real aim of it all?

Is it the freedom of the German population of Danzig, which is not menaced, or matters of prestige,—or is

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it a matter of barring Poland from the Baltic, from which Poland will not let herself be barred!

The same considerations concern the communication across our province of Pomorze. I insist on the term 'province of Pomorze.' The word 'corridor' is an artificial invention, for it is an ancient Polish land, with an insignificant percentage of German colonists.

We have given to the German Reich all railway facilities, we allowed its citizens to travel without customs or passport formalities from the Reich to East Prussia. We have suggested the extension of these facilities to road transport.

And again the question obtrudes itself—what is the real aim of it all?

We have no reason to obstruct German citizens in their communication with their eastern province. But we have on the other hand no ground whatever for restricting our sovereignty on our own territory.

In the first and the second instance, that is in the matter of the future of Danzig and of the communication through Pomorze, it is still only one-sided concessions which the Government of the Reich appears to be demanding from us. A self-respecting nation does not make one-sided concessions. Where is the reciprocity? It looks rather vague in the German proposals. The Chancellor of the Reich mentioned in his speech a triple condominium in Slovakia. I have to state that I have heard that suggestion for the first time in the Chancellor's

speech of April 28th. In some former conversations only allusions were made to the effect that in the event of a general agreement, the problem of Slovakia could be discussed. We did not seek to carry on such conversations, for it is not our custom to make bargains with the interests of others. The proposal of an extension of the pact of non-aggression to twenty-five years has also not been put forward in any definite form in any of the recent conversations. Here also there were unofficial allusions made by prominent members of the Reich Government. But there were in such conversations also various other allusions, reaching far wider and further than the subjects now under consideration. I reserve the right to return to this matter if necessary.

In his speech the Chancellor of the Reich proposes as a concession on his part the recognition and definite acceptance of the existing frontier between Poland and Germany. I have to state that this would only have been a recognition of our indisputable property *de jure* and *de facto*, so that this proposal also cannot alter my point that the German claims with regard to Danzig and the motor-road remain one-sided demands.

In the light of these explanations, the House expects from me, and with good reason, an answer to the last passage of the German memorandum, which says: 'If the Polish Government attaches importance to a new contractual settlement of Polish-German relations, the

German Government is prepared for it.' It seems to me that I have already defined our actual attitude.

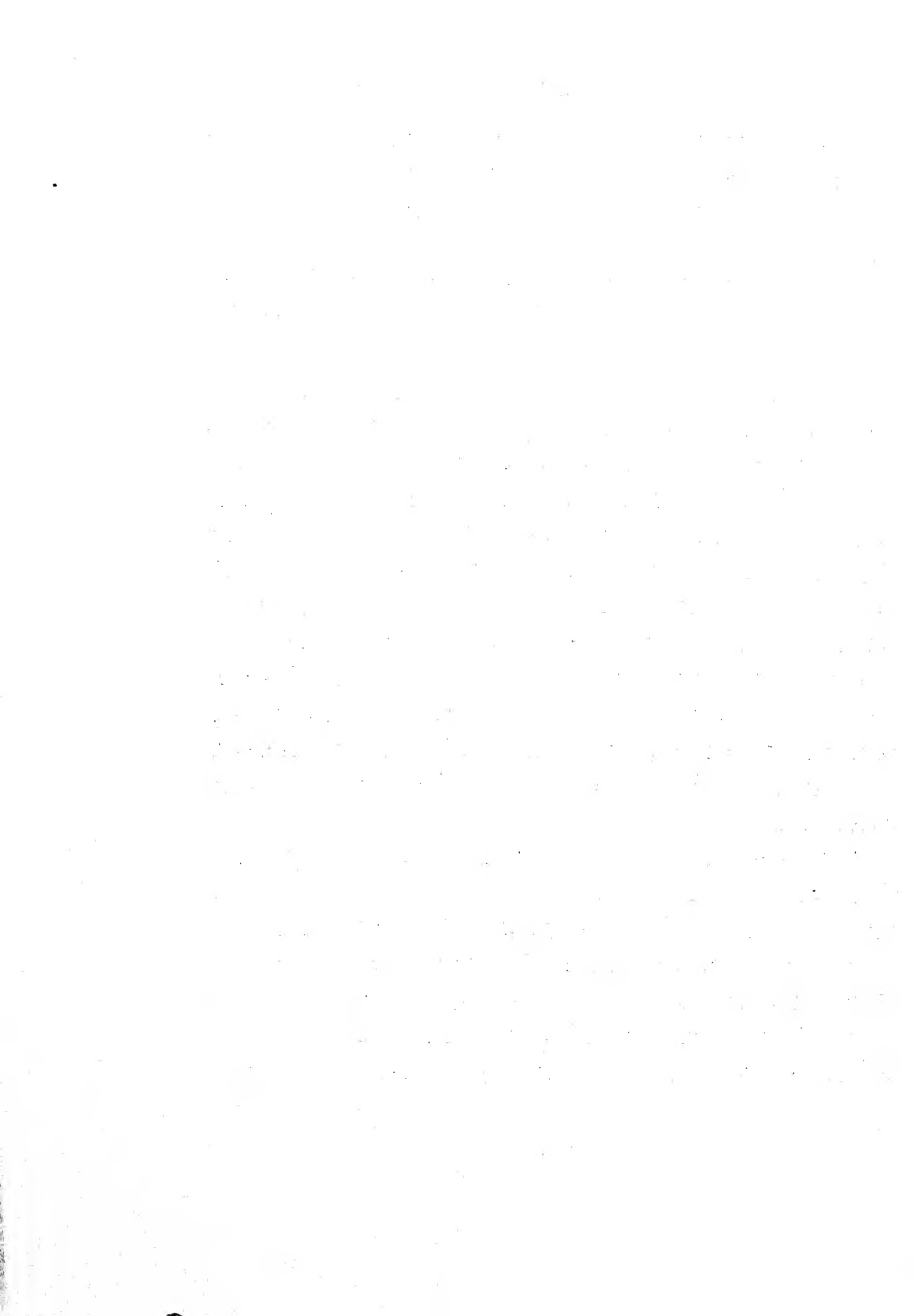
For the sake of order I will make a brief summary of what I said.

The motive for such an agreement would be the word 'peace,' which the Chancellor stressed in his speech.

Peace is certainly the aim of the hard work and strenuous efforts of Polish diplomacy. Two conditions are necessary for this word to have any real value: (1) peaceful intentions, (2) peaceful methods of action. If the Government of the Reich is actually guided by those two conditions in its relation to our country, all conversations, naturally presupposing the principles which I have previously enumerated, are possible.

If such conversations materialized, the Polish Government will, according to its custom, regard the resulting problems objectively, in the light of recent experiences, but without refusing to give its best will to their consideration.

Peace is a valuable and desirable thing. Our generation, which bled in several wars, surely deserves a period of peace. However, peace, like almost all things of this world, has its price, high but definable. We in Poland do not know the conception of peace at any price. There is only one thing in the life of men, nations, and States which is above price—and that is honour.



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Acc. No.	13458
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Book No.	786

